

Newsletter for Birdwatchers

VOL. XXII NO. 1 JAN. 1982

PLEASE REPORT TO NEAREST
FOREST OFFICER IF YOU SEE
THIS BIRD



Jerdon's or
Doublebanded Courser

Rare



Common

Indian Courser

0 30 60 90 mm

NEWSLETTER
FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. XXII

No. 1

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Editorial

The past and the future: At the commencement of our 22nd year we might indulge in some introspection regarding past performance and future activities. I hope some of you will comment on the possibilities of the Census suggested in the December issue. Irrespective of the immediate results, it will set in motion the mechanism of the operation and establish a few Centres which can later link up with others in the all India grid. There are several of our subscribers, who if they can find the time, could from past experience attempt to list the breeding birds of their respective areas. I realise that example is better than precept, and I cannot expect others to respond unless I submit a list from the Dodda-Gubbi area. This I will attempt to do. The quality of the articles have certainly improved greatly over the past few years but there is still too much listing of the species observed. What we should attempt this year is to try and understand why certain species are restricted to specific habitats and why others are ubiquitous.

Regarding finances, I was able to meet costs in 1981 only because a few issues were produced free of charge, by some companies with cyclostyling facilities. My attempts to get the post office authorities to consider the Newsletter as deserving of concessional postal rates has not been successful. Can someone help to have this done? As you see I have saved on the cost of producing a new cover by using an old block, and I did not have to undergo the annual embarrassment of requesting E.Hanumantha Rao for a photograph for 1982.

I hope the New Year has started well for all of you.

Colorado Field Ornithologist: Among the incidental advantages of editing the Newsletter is the fact that we receive several excellent papers and periodicals in exchange for our rag. One journal which aims to perform the same function as the Newsletter and which always shames us by its consistently high standards and professionalism is the Colorado Field Ornithologists Quarterly. It is devoted to the field study of birds in Colorado and contains articles and notes of scientific or general interest, and reports of unusual observations. It also contains photographs, pictures, sketches, diagrams.

Indeed, some of the material is reminiscent of our Newsletter. 'The first nesting of vermilion flycatchers in Colorado', for instance, is an account of the activities which went on around this flycatchers nest, until it was struck by tragedy in the shape of a hailstorm. There are accounts of field trips, with the lists of birds observed. Plus of course, there are more scientific and technical articles. The latest issue contains a very useful description of flight and necessary adaptations in birds. One point which I found surprising was that no scientific names are used at all. There are birds with names like Upland Sandpiper, Solitary sandpiper, Least sandpiper - and presumably these names are all so well established as to need no further identification. With us, the scientific name is indispensable for correct identification.

Apart from field trips every week end, the Colorado Field Ornithologist runs a taxonomy clinic, where amateurs are given lessons in skinning and identification. The secret of this extremely active and successful club is obviously the large number of very keen birders who participate in all its doings. The title page carries a long list of its officers, Committee members and staff. Its journal has 2 Editors and three Editorial assistants. Our Newsletter must now start to think big, and aim for an infrastructure of similar dimension.

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Acta Zoologica Craco-Beinsia: I have also been receiving Ornithological papers and material from Poland, a bulky tome called Acta Zoologica Craco-Beinsia, an annual journal of Zoology, carries a few articles in English as well and a short summary in English is appended to the Polish language papers. Luckily three Ornithological articles are written entirely in English. While the main substance of these articles is interesting for us, the real lesson is contained in the detailed descriptions of the method and means of carrying out experiments.

The breeding biology of the bull-finch is interesting. The male 'hovers' close by, but does not actually take part in nest-building or incubation. But if he moves away the female stops building, too. But of real practical use to us is the description of the method by which experiments were conducted, and the materials and constructions which were used. I would be glad to send this issue to any of our subscribers who are interested.

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Birding in Tibet by Peter Jackson, Haut Verger. 1171
Bougy-Villars, Switzerland. Tel: (021) 766012: How many times had I walked on the southern flanks of the Himalaya and longed to see the mysterious land of Tibet hidden behind those great icy walls! And here I was in June 1980 standing on the roof of the Dalai Lama's Potala Palace with Lhasa and the Kyu Chu valley spread below me. Red-billed choughs swept through the air to roosts under the eaves; a hoopoe flew to a hole in the wall and passed in a tidbit; and a cinnamon tree sparrow peered from the next hole. A kestrel soared over the town, and from my vantage point I had a similar view, but doubtless our brains were registering quite different things.

The chance to visit Tibet came through an invitation from the Chinese Academy to participate in a Symposium on the Geology and Natural History of the Tibetan Plateau in Peking, followed by a two-week field trip travelling from Lhasa to Kathmandu. I was pleased to find that Dr. Dillon Ripley from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington and Dr. George Schaller from the New York Zoological Society, both old friends and experts on the wildlife of India and its region, were also there.

I took the train from Lausanne to Peking - nine days travelling across Europe to Moscow and on through the Urals and across Siberia to Lake Baikal, and then through Mongolia to China and Peking. Magpies and tree sparrows were round my home in Switzerland when I left and I saw them all the way until they greeted me in China and in Tibet. The ornithological highlight of the long journey was seeing two or three small flocks of demoiselle cranes on the edge of the Gobi desert.

We flew from Peking to Lhasa via Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province. Our flight took us over the Sichuan Alps, which form the eastern edge of the Tibetan plateau, and we gazed down into the deep gorges of the Yangtze, Mekong, Salween and Tsangpo-Brahmaputra. Add the Yellow river and the Indus, plus the Ganga, which rises just over the southern edge of the plateau, and it is interesting to reflect that half or more of the world's population receives water from the barren roof of the world.

Our turbo-prop airliner came to a halt on a simple airfield at some 3,500 metres by the Tsangpo. Little skylarks enlivened the scene and were very easy to approach.

Lhasa is a two hour drive from the airfield, first westwards along the Tsangpo, across the Chhushu bridge and up the Kyu Chu valley. Rounding a corner a distant golden speck glitters in the sun - the roof of the Potala. But six large silvery oil storage tanks at the foot of the hills and a cement plant detract from this first view.

The dirt roads, smooth but dusty, often had flocks of feeding Tibetan snow finches which took off with a flash of white wings. Grey-backed shrikes sat on telephone wires and bushes; swallows pursued aerial insects, and a large bird of prey flew over, possibly an immature golden eagle. Over the river there were terns, which were probably whiskered, and two black-eared kites.

Although this initial list was promising we found bird life in Tibet very sparse. But I noted 61 species out of 172 listed for the area by Charles Vaurie in *Tibet and Its Birds*, which is not too bad a record for two weeks. The big disappointment was not seeing large numbers of bar-headed geese, which used to breed in southern Tibet, where they were very tame. There were a few domesticated birds in the garden of the Dalai Lama's summer palace, the Norbulinka, but the only others we saw were a group of four near Tingri, which hurriedly took off at the distant sight of us.

The ruddy shelduck too was once a very common and tame bird, but we saw only a few. A pair southwest of Shigatse was notable for having 11 young.

Most of Tibet is a high-altitude desert with few trees and only small alpine plants and bushes like the purple-flowered Sophora moorcroftiana emerging from the arid land. Lhasa is something of an oasis with trees, gardens, and fields of wheat, barley and vegetables. There were great tits, white wagtails and, in wet areas, yellow-headed wagtails provided a splash of vivid colour.

My hopes of photographing a wall creeper on the Potala were dashed, but I saw one later fluttering its red wings butterfly-like along the side of a gorge west of Shigatse.

Northwest of Lhasa runs the Tobing Chu valley leading to the Yangbajain geothermal field. On the way we saw an upland buzzard, lammergeiers, and a Himalayan griffon vulture. An ibisbill probed among the streamside rocks with its long downcurved bill. On the stony ground there were White-browed and common rosefinches, and

perhaps some other species of the carpodacus genus. A dark-headed, dull bird was Brandt's mountain finch. The Yangbajain geothermal field with its geysers, hot springs, and thermal lake is one of 40 such areas in the 2,000 km Himalayan geothermal belt. While plumes of steam rose against a background of the snow-capped Nanchen Tanglha range I found horned larks and rock buntings, both of which have very strong black facial markings, and Hume's short-toed larks were common.

But the really exciting thing was our first contact with Hume's ground chough, also called the ground pecker. It is like a large greyish lark with a longish down-curved bill, which it uses like a pick-axe when feeding. We were to see them several times during our journey, usually in pairs which flew low over the ground and perched on small stones, flicking their tails like redstarts to show white outer tail feathers. One was carrying food to a nest, which may have characteristically been in the hole of a pika mouse hare. This bird is classified with the crow family, but Dr. Ripley thinks it may be an aberrant starling.

Driving from Lhasa towards Shigatse we spotted a solitary goosander on the Kyu Chu river. This fish-eating duck can be seen on Himalayan rivers and nests near my home on Lake Geneva.

After crossing the Tsangpo we climbed over the Kambala pass and looked down on the sapphire waters of the Yamdrok Tso. Passing along its bare shores we saw brown-headed gulls and a few large gulls that could have been herring gulls. Vaurie does not list this species for Tibet, but it is recorded from some of the high lakes in Nepal.

At the marshy tip of the northwestern arm of the Yamdrok Tso there was an interesting assembly of birds, but we were able to spend only a few minutes there. However, we saw a pair of great crested grebes with a nest, ruddy shelduck and young, wigeon, pochard, tufted duck, little grebe, and possibly black-necked grebe.

A lunch stop by the lake produced a flock of Tibetan twites, rather nondescript little birds, some calandra larks, and a ground pecker which flew up on to a wall, bobbed its head and squeaked.

Gyantse fort stood out clearly on its mound as we emerged from a narrow valley. Here we were shown cartridge cases, shell fragments and other relics of the battle there during the Younghusband expedition to Lhasa in 1904. The broad fertile valley leading from Gyantse to Shigatse produced no new birds, except for some flocks of snow pigeons.

Just south of Shigatse the road passes through the 1,000 km long ophiolite belt thrust up from the depths of the ancient Tethys Sea, which was extinguished when the Indian tectonic plate crashed into Asia 38 million years ago. It had taken nearly 200 million years on its journey from the south where it had formed part of the super-continent of Gondwanaland, which broke up to form Africa, South America, Antarctica and Australia. The Chinese geologists with us said that the Indian plate was still thrusting under Tibet below our feet and pushing up the Himalayas at about 10 mm a year.

On the outskirts of Shigatse some of our party found the fossil skulls of two birds of prey and some rodent remains while examining sediment layers from an ancient lake. Preliminary speculation is that they were from the nest of a form of marsh harrier and 8,000 and 12,000 years old. The remains were taken to Peking for further study.

East of Shigatse the Tsangpo flows through a broad arid valley before passing through the 80-kilometre long Toksha gorge with its many rapids. Among crescent dunes here we found the Tibetan toad-headed lizard Phrynocephalus theobaldi, two of which left to become the first specimens to reach America according to one of our companions.

Resuming our journey westwards we sped across the plain along the northside of the ophiolite belt. A little owl was sitting on a telegraph pole and allowed a close approach before flying to the next pole.

Through much of the journey we came across Hodgson's redstart, as well as the black redstart, and it was always a pleasure to see an old friend of the Himalayan streams, the white-capped redstart.

We stopped a night at Shekar, now called New Tingri, and climbed the steep hill through the stark ruins of the great dzong, blown to pieces during the Tibetan

rebellion and the Cultural Revolution.

The road took us along the Phang Chu river, past old Tingri, and eventually we climbed to the 5,200 metre peneplain of Yagro Tsongla, where sheep managed to find some grazing on the flat stony land. The snow peak of Shishapangma shone to the west, and we turned south descending quickly along the river that becomes the Sunkosi in Nepal.

At Nyalam bare rocks were giving way to increasing vegetation. Grey clouds filled the valley and monsoon rain fell. We came into familiar Nepalese forest and vegetation with bird calls resounding everywhere.

Here we saw lammergeier and crested serpent eagle, house swift and Nepal House martin, streaked laughing thrush, plumbeous redstart, whistling thrush, grey wagtail and Himalayan goldfinch, while hearing the calls of Eurasian and Himalayan cuckoos, red-headed babblers, and black-capped sibia. A special thrill for me was to realise that a brief flashe of green and red was my first view of the fire-tailed myzornis, a bird I had long wanted to see. Shortly afterwards I got a second look.

In terms of human frontiers these birds were in Tibet, but their habitat is really an extension of Nepal into a Himalayan gorge.

Although this is written for bird-watchers I should have liked to be able to report seeing herds of wild ass and flocks of blue sheep like earlier travellers to Tibet. We saw none, although the Chinese zoologists with us said there were some near one of the passes we crossed. Two hares, a marmot and a pika were the only wild mammals we saw.

Birds seen on a journey from Lhasa to Kathmandu via
Gyantse, Shigatse Shekar and Nyalam (2-14 June 1980).

Little grebe (Podiceps ruficollis)
 Black-necked grebe (Podiceps nigricollis) ?
 Crested grebe (Podiceps cristatus)
 Bar-headed goose (Anser indicus)
 Ruddy shelduck (Tadorna ferruginea)
 Common teal (Anas crecca)
 Gadwall (Anas strepera)
 Wigeon (Anas penelope)
 Common pochard (Arthya ferina)
 Tufted duck (Arthya fuligula)
 Goosander (Mergus merganser)
 Black-eared kite (Milvus migrans lineatus)
 Upland buzzard (Buteo hemilasius)
 Golden eagle (Aquila chysaetos) ?
 Lammergeier (Gypaetus barbatus)
 Himalayan griffon vulture (Gyps himalayaensis)
 Kestrel (Falco tinnunculus)
 Coot (Fulica atra)
 Redshank (Tringa totanus)
 Ibisbill (Ibidorhyncha struthersii)
 Herring gull (Larus argentatus) ?
 Brown-headed gull (Larus brunnicephalus)
 Common tern (Sterna hirundo)
 Whiskered tern (Chlidaria hybrida) ?
 Snow pigeon (Columba leuconota)
 Hill pigeon (Columba rupestris)
 Rufous turtle dove (Streptopelia orientalis)
 Little owl (Athene noctua)
 Large white-rumped swift (Apus pacificus)
 Hoopoe (Upupa epops)
 Sand martin (Riparia riparia)
 Swallow (Hirundo rustica)
 Red-rumped swallow (Hirundo daurica)
 Hume's short-toed lark (Calandrella acutirostris)
 Tibetan calandra lark (Melanocorypha maxima)
 Horned lark (Eremophila alpestris)
 Little skylark (Alauda gulgula)
 Yellow-headed wagtail (Motacilla citreola)
 White wagtail (Motacilla alba)
 Grey-backed shrike (Lanius tephronotus)
 Magpie (Pica pica)
 Hume's ground chough (Pseudopodoces humilis)
 Red-billed chough (Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax)
 Yellow-billed chough (Pyrrhocorax graculus)
 Jungle crow (Corvus macrorhynchos)
 Raven (Corvus corax)

Tickell's willow warbler (Phylloscopus affinis)
 Desert wheatear (Oenanthe deserti)
 Isabelline wheatear (Oenanthe isabellina)
 Black redstart (Phoenicurus ochruros)
 Hodgson's redstart (Phoenicurus hodgsoni)
 White-capped redstart (Chairmarromis leucocephalus)
 Great tit (Parus major)
 Wallcreeper (Tichodroma muraria)
 Tree sparrow (Passer montanus)
 Cinnamon sparrow (Passer rutilans)
 Tibetan snow finch (Montifringilla adamsi)
 Brandt's mountain finch (Leucosticte brandti)
 White-browed rosefinch (Carpodacus thura)
 Common rosefinch (Carpodacus erythrinus)
 Rock bunting (Emberiza cia)

The role of ICBP in India by Dr.B.K. Tikader, Ph.D., D.Sc.,
Director, Zoological Survey of India, 34, Chittaranjan
Avenue, Calcutta 700012: The Bird wing of the Indian
 Board for Wild Life (IBWL) has been acting as the Indian
 National Section of the International Council for Bird
 Preservation (ICBP) and looking after the interest of
 avian fauna of the country which consist of about
 1,160 species belonging to 98 families. The National
 section has been entrusted with a wide range of tasks
 which include (a) to co-ordinate bird conservation at
 the national level. (b) to develop national policies
 (c) to inform the ICBP Secretariat regarding bird conser-
 vation problems and status of species and (d) to advise
 the government on bird conservation matters. This section
 is represented in the Executive Board of ICBP by a
 Chairman of the National Section.

From the very beginning, since the inception of ICBP,
 the country's two leading institutions in the field of
 conservation, the Zoological Survey of India, and the
 Bombay Natural History Society have been closely associ-
 ated with the activities of this international organisa-
 tion. Recently on 12th September, 1981, a meeting of
 the Expert Committee on Birds of the (IBWL) was convened
 by Dr.B.K.Tikader, Director, Zoological Survey of India
 and the Head of ICBP in India, at the premises of the
 Bombay Natural History Society, which was presided over
 by Dr.Salim Ali. The highlights of the meeting were:-

1. Status survey of Peafowl in India: It was decided
 to undertake a pilot survey to work out a method for

estimating the peafowl population in Rajasthan by the State Forest Department during the summer of 1982. It was recommended that strict vigilance should be maintained and the necessary steps taken to protect the species from economic exploitation. Concerning the trade of peacock feathers the committee recommended that the export ceiling of 50 lakhs pieces of peacock feathers be increased to one crore for 1981-82 as well as for future years.

2. Export policy on live birds: It was suggested that only well-known pests like parakeets and munia and common birds such as crows, sparrows and mynas may be allowed to be exported from India.

3. Status survey of rare and endangered species: Dr. Salim Ali stressed on the urgent need of a status survey of the Pink-headed duck, Mountain quail, Jerdon's courser, Forest spotted owlet and White Winged Wood-duck. This was accepted by the Committee and it recommended that the Government of India may be requested to enlarge the scope of the on going endangered species project to include the status survey of the above mentioned five species, even though the first three are presumed to be extinct.

4. Wetland Convention: It was disclosed that the Government of India has to ratify the Wetland Convention and it is essential to prepare expeditiously a National Inventory of Wetlands, specially those which are important waterfowl habitats.

5. Captive breeding of Houbara Bustard: The Committee expressed full support to the existing ban on the hunting of this species. Further it was of the opinion that since the Houbara is only a winter visitor, captive breeding is not necessary at this stage.

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[According to the synopsis of the birds of India and Pakistan by Dillon Ripley, there are seventy seven Families in India. Families continue to be broken up into sub-families as more detailed taxonomy and ecological information is available. For example Ripley says - I include as sub families of the *Muscicapidae* seven families formerly listed separately by Baker] Editor.

Extracts from letters:

Captive Breeding of White-winged Wood-ducks: A letter received from Mrs.G.N.S. Robertson quotes from communication on the effort at captive breeding of this species in Slimbridge. 'We are in the process of building up our stocks of white-winged Wood-duck and they breed regularly with as every year but unfortunately are very prone to contracting Avian T.B. and we have many losses of adults of 3 years old and older with this disease. Unfortunately there is no cure or inoculation against it, and at the moment we are rearing the youngsters in what we feel is a T.B. free environment, and moving them to various collections including some of our other centres which we know to be free from T.B. and hopefully we can build up our stocks quicker by having longer lived birds.'

We are loaning white-winged wood-duck to reputable establishments round the world so we are not keeping all our eggs in one basket, so to speak! We would dearly, love to send birds back to Assam and other areas where they existed before but we would really like to have an area that has been set aside solely for ww ducks where we know they would come to no harm and be sure that the forests would not be cut down in their habitat.....'

Mrs. G.N.S. Robertson
Martindale
Easton Royal, Pewsey
Wiltshire, UK.

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'.....In the name of the lab perhaps (hopefully) I shall get a tinshed soon - but the best thing is process to build a good size outdoor aviary is in progress! I cannot leave my fidel spotted munia and weaver bird afterall.....'

Dr.Miss Asha Chandola,
Department of Zoology
Garhwal University
Srinagar UP 246174.

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I have been out here on the Copperbelt on mining business since mid August and return to UK in ten days time. I have clocked up around 120 species of birds including quite a few Palearctic migrants, such as European swallows, Rollers and Bee-eaters, Redbacked Shrike, Spotted Flycatcher, Willow Warbler and all sorts of waders - Ruffs, Common, Curlew, Green, Marsh, and Wood Sandpipers; Red Shank, Little stint and so forth.

L.A. Hill
147, St. Pancras
Chichester, Sussex.



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Rare

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Common

Indian Courser

0 30 60 90 mm

ಜನಕಲ್ಯಾಣದಡೆಗೆ ತೀವ್ರಗತಿಯ ಮುನ್ನಡೆ

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಚೆನ್ನಾಗಿ ಕೆಲಸ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದೆ

—ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ಇಂದಿರಾಗಾಂಧಿ

ಪ್ರಧಾನಿಯವರ ಹೊಸ 20 ಅಂಶಗಳ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವನ್ನು ಇನ್ನೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಸಿಕ್ಕೆಯಿಂದ ಜಾರಿಗೊಳಿಸುವುದಾಗಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ, ಗಣರಾಜ್ಯ ದಿನಾಚರಣೆಯ ಈ ಶುಭದಿನದಂದು ಪ್ರತಿಜ್ಞೆ ಮಾಡುವುದು. ಹಿಂದಿನ ಸಾಧನೆಯ ಸಿಂಹಾಸನದ ಮೇಲಿನ ಪ್ರಗತಿಗೆ ಚೇತನ.

ಹಕ್ಕು ಪತ್ರಗಳ ವಿತರಣೆ: ಉಳುವವನಿಗೆ ಭೂಮಿ ನೀಡುವ ಭೂ ಸುಧಾರಣೆ ಕಾಯ್ದೆಗೆ ಹೊಸ ಹರುಪು ತುಂಬಿ ಶೇಕಡಾ 95ರಷ್ಟು ಗೇಡೆದಾರರ ಅರ್ಜಿಗಳನ್ನು ವಿಲೇವಾರಿ ಮಾಡಲಾಗಿದೆ. ವಿತರಣೆ ಮಾಡಲಾದ ಹಕ್ಕು ಪತ್ರಗಳ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 57 ಸಾವಿರದಿಂದ 3 ಲಕ್ಷ 72 ಸಾವಿರಕ್ಕೇರಿದೆ. ಇದು ಸಾಧನೆಗೆ ಸಾಕ್ಷಿ.

ನೀರಾವರಿಗೆ ಪ್ರಾಧಾನ್ಯತೆ: ಹಾರಂಗಿ, ಹೇಮಾವತಿ ಮತ್ತು ಮಲಪ್ರಭಗಳಿಂದ ನೀರು ಬೀಡುವುದರ ಮೂಲಕ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಭೂಮಿ ನೀರಾವರಿಗೆ ಒಳಪಡಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಕೃಷ್ಣಾ ಮೇಲ್ಮಂಡ ಯೋಜನೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಇತರ ನೀರಾವರಿ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಚುರುಕುಗೊಳಿಸಿ 81398 ಹೆಕ್ಟೇರ್ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಭೂಮಿಗೆ ನೀರು ನೀಡಲು ಅದ್ಯತಿ ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಒಂದು ಲಕ್ಷ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳಿಗೆ ಮನೆ: ಜನವರಿ 1980ರಿಂದ ಅಕ್ಟೋಬರ್ 1981ರ ವರೆಗೆ 1.18 ಲಕ್ಷ ಮನೆಗಳನ್ನು ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಇದೇ ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ 12812 ಜೀತದಾಳುಗಳಿಗೆ ಪುನರ್ವಸತಿ ಕಲ್ಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಎಲ್ಲ ಹಳ್ಳಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಶಾಲೆ: 300ಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಜನಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ಇರುವ ಪ್ರತಿ ಹಳ್ಳಿಗೂ ಶಾಲೆ ಮತ್ತು ಶಾಲಾ ಕೂತಡಿಯನ್ನು ನೀಡಲು ನಿರ್ಧರಿಸಲಾಗಿದ್ದು, ಈ ವರ್ಷ 1688 ಶಾಲಾ ಕೂತಡಿಗಳ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣ ಕೈಗೊಳ್ಳಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ರೇಷ್ಮೆ ಉತ್ಪಾದನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಜ್ಜೆ: ಜಾಗತಿಕ ಬ್ಯಾಂಕ್ ನೆರವಿನಿಂದ ಬೃಹತ್ ರೇಷ್ಮೆ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆ ಯನ್ನು ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಗತಗೊಳಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. 1985ರಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ಯೋಜನೆ ಪೂರ್ಣಗೊಂಡಾಗ ರೇಷ್ಮೆ ವಾರ್ಷಿಕ ಉತ್ಪಾದನೆ 2700 ಟನ್‌ಗಳಿಂದ 4300 ಟನ್‌ಗಳಿಗೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚುತ್ತದೆ.

ಬಡತನ ನಿರ್ಮೂಲನೆಗೆ ಒಂದು ಯೋಜನೆ: ಇಡೀ ರಾಜ್ಯವನ್ನು ಸಮಗ್ರ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆ ಅಂತರ್ಗತ ತರಲಾಗಿದ್ದು ಇಲ್ಲಿಯವರೆಗೆ 1.5 ಲಕ್ಷ ರೈತರನ್ನು ಬಡತನ ರೇಖೆಗಿಂತ ಮೇಲೆ ಬರಲು ಸಹಾಯ ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಈ ವರ್ಷ 1.05 ಲಕ್ಷ ರೈತರನ್ನು ಬಡತನ ರೇಖೆಗಿಂತ ಮೇಲೆತ್ತಲು ಸಹಾಯ ನೀಡುವ ಯೋಜನೆ ಇದೆ. ವಿಶೇಷ ಯೋಜನೆಯ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಆರನೆಯ ಯೋಜನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ 5.76 ಲಕ್ಷ ಹರಿಜನ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಸ್ಥಿತಿಯನ್ನು ಉತ್ತಮಗೊಳಿಸಲು ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮಗಳನ್ನು ಜಾರಿಗೊಳಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

‘ಶ್ರಮ ಎವ ಜಯತೆ’ ಎಂಬ ಪ್ರಧಾನಿಯವರ ಸಂದೇಶಕ್ಕೆ ಬದ್ಧವಾಗಿರುವ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಮುಂಬರುವ ವರ್ಷ ಕೃಷಿ, ವಿದ್ಯುಚ್ಛಕ್ತಿ, ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆ ಮುಂತಾದ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಉತ್ಪಾದನೆಯನ್ನು ಹೆಚ್ಚಿಸುವುದರ ಮೂಲಕ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಉತ್ಪಾದನಾ ವರ್ಷವನ್ನು ಯಶಸ್ವಿಗೊಳಿಸುವುದರಲ್ಲಿ ತನ್ನ ಹಿಂದಾದ ಕೊಡುಗೆ ನೀಡಲು ಕಂಕಣಬದ್ಧವಾಗಿದೆ.

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ವಾರ್ತಾ ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಚಾರ ಇಲಾಖೆಯ ಪ್ರಕಟನೆ

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to buy up that particular bit of country. Will there be a day when Indian Conservationists can whip round and buy up the Dal Lake?

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A Waterfowl Conservation Conference in Hungary By Prakash Gole: The International Waterfowl Research Bureau, the premier organization concerned with conservation of waterfowl in the world, held its annual Board Meeting in Debrecen, Hungary in October 1981. India is not yet a member of IWRB and so I was invited to attend the meeting only in the capacity of an Observer. Though India is still not a member, our Government recently ratified the International Convention on Wetlands, popularly known as the Ramsar Convention. The IWRB is the convenor and promoter of this convention which deals with protection of breeding and wintering habitats of migratory waterfowl.

At the Board Meeting, India was congratulated for ratifying the Convention. Two major wetlands in India are now covered by the Convention. They are: The Chilka Lake in Orissa and the Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary at Bharatpur in Rajasthan. I was asked to make a statement on the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl in India. I spoke of the two Ramsar sites, of the various studies of movements and population structure of birds undertaken by the Bombay Natural History Society in Bharatpur and point Calimere; of their efforts to elicit cooperation from Shri.Lanka, Bangla Desh and Pakistan in ringing of waterfowl; and of the World Wildlife Fund-India expeditions to Ladakh and Bhutan which resulted in the discovery of a new breeding colony of Barheaded Geese and a new wintering area of the Blacknecked Crane.

The International Goose Symposium was held at the same place along with the Board Meeting. In the Symposium most papers dealt with the status and biology of Redbreasted and Greater and Lesser Whitefronted Geese. Some papers also to account of the phenomenal increase in numbers in recent years of the Greylag Geese. An interesting discussion followed my paper on Barheaded Geese in India. The delegate from the Soviet Union gave figures of the alarming decline in recent years of the breeding population of this goose in the USSR. He told the conference that the total number of individuals in the USSR is not

likely to be above 1000. Another 4000 are to be found in the Mongolian People's Republic. Unfortunately there was no Chinese delegate present and nothing definite could be learnt of its status in Tibet and China. However, the conference came to the conclusion that Barheaded have declined drastically in numbers and probably no more than 10,000 individuals remain in the wild. Accordingly, a resolution was passed recommending that the governments of India and China accord complete protection to this goose within their respective territories. I was elected to be the Co-ordinator for this species and was entrusted with the task of gathering up-to-date information on the status and biology of Barheaded Geese.

After the conference, the delegates were taken to see the famous National Parks and Reserves of Hungary. Of particular interest from our point of view, was the visit to the bustard breeding centre. The Great Bustard (*Otis Tarda*) are bred and reared at this centre for ultimate release in the wild. They lay their eggs in agricultural fields and clutches of their eggs are found during agricultural operations. Chicks hatch within 24 to 28 days and are kept in pens for a week. They are fed a mixed diet of vegetables, minced meat and boiled eggs. As they grow they are released in larger enclosures and given animal food as well, especially rodents. Adult birds are released in the country side. Many of them stay near the centre where they are offered food. Their total number in the wild is believed to be around 3000 and they are fully protected.

Pirotan - A Desert Island by Lavkumar Khacher: I celebrated the passing of 1981, and the ushering of the New Year with the tides reflecting the golden light of a setting sun, and the rosy glow of the rising sun on a little Island - a horse-shoe of sand in the Gulf of Kutch. Pirotan has now become one of the many places associated with happy memories, and since most of my happy moments have been with birds, here too I have bird memories to recall.

It was on Pirotan, some twelve years back that I saw my first Crab Flovers, a flock of some 200 hundred of them very attractively black and immaculate white massed on a spot of sand barely above the high tide. Subsequently, I have invariably seen *Dromas ardeola* every time I have visited Pirotan. They are exceptionally confiding, and

engagingly loquacious keeping a musical chanting, and murmuring all the while and in fact, where so many birds are white with black, it is this pleasant sound which identifies the species long before the flock is spotted in the distance/or made out against the glitter of wet mud and water. The Crab plovers feed actively both by day and by night when low tide exposes the tidal flats and coral reefs, and while feeding they scatter far and wide, but with the turn of the tide the feeding birds start accumulating till at high tide they form the large compact flocks. As the tide pushes them off the mud and on to the sand, the birds start bathing, and are quite unmindful of an inquisitive birdwatcher admiring them. It is only when the advancing water pushes them too close to the observer will the murmur turn to agitated clanging and suddenly the entire flock rises in unison and flies fast and low over the waves, now turning, but never rising more than a few feet above the water as they head for a further sand spit. They never fly over the Island or the mangrove jungle, and are entirely wedded to the shoreline. Perhaps, I might make bold to suggest an alteration to the general habits described in the handbook. They are entirely, not essentially, maritime; they are usually very confiding; feeding by day or night as dictated by the tides; flight is rapid and direct with legs trailing behind. As far status, distribution and habitat - it is a regular winter visitor to the Gulf of Kutch and Cambay where they might be met in flocks of over 200 birds. I hope to locate a nesting colony on Bhaydar and Chank Islands near the entrance to the Gulf of Kutch.

Another bird which I saw on Pirotan is the very attractive Oystercatcher. The black and white plumage and long, bright red bill are immediate pointers to the birds identity. This winter I saw a flock of over 40 Oystercatchers.

The other waders on the Island are Bartailed Godwits, Curlew, Whimbrel, Grey Plovers, Common Red Shank, Terek Sandpipers, Curlew Sandpipers, Common stilts, Dunlins, the attractive and very friendly Turn stones and the Cuddly Sanderlings. Green shanks are, surprisingly, less evident, and I miss the other sandpipers so common inland. Avocets seem to be passage birds and when present are there in great flocks, and at other times totally absent. Black-winged stilts do not appear to form part of the shore bird medley. The commonest birds are the Lesser Sandplovers and the slightly larger Large Sandplovers.

I have yet to satisfy myself as regards to the Kentish Plovers which are, in winter, quite similar to the Lesser sand plovers.

Gulls and Terns are an attractive part of the avian population. Both the Herring Gulls and the Great Black headed Gulls are best seen on Pirotan. I am rather confused with the Lesser from their customary area West of the light house. They were perhaps in the great Rann of Kutch busy nesting. Strangely, I have yet to see the Lesser flamingo around the Island though they congregate in large numbers on the salt pans across the mainland.

Pirotan is the place to see the Osprey. I have seen one couple at times. The Brahminy kite is a regular bird and I suspect a pair has made the Island its head quarters. Marsh Harriers frequently quarter the mangroves and this time a magnificent male Pale Herrier sailed past as we were watching a Streaked Wren Warbler jingling from the top of a grass tussock. Last year, while glassing a pair of Oystercatchers, my subjects suddenly flew off in alarm as a Peregrine Falcon rushed past me barely a few feet to the right. As its prey escaped, the superb falcon rose up to rise into the sky as I followed it through my field glasses, adding yet another avian vision to my memory bank.

Common swallows skim low along the sand dunes swapping up the small masqueto-like insects which dance above the water of the high tide. Wagtails generally white, turn up from time to time. There are several Desert Wheatears which have divided the sandbars for the winter. A very charmingly confiding male used the shade of my work tent regaling me often with a subdued warbling. This year, my eagerly looked for friend was replaced by a muted but equally friendly female. The sand and grassy areas are inhabited by several pairs of Crested Larks and Sand Larks. Their continual presence at times a couple of feet away, provide unique atmosphere to life on this Island. Both these Larks are resident as indeed is the Common kingfisher in the mangrove jungle and the Tailor bird. White-eyes, Purple sunbirds, Common mynas and Ring doves live in the small patch of thorn and grass behind the light house. Both House sparrows and House Crows are around. This winter we had a large flock of Rose-coloured starlings feeding among banks of alae flowers, Blackbacked Gulls the dark backed subspecies of the Herring Gull. I must spend time examining skins at

Horn bill House. The Black headed Gulls - the smaller species are common, but the Brown headed is less so. I have suspected seeing the Slenderbilled Gull, but would not like to be emphatic. I find the gulls quite confusing.

The terns are a different cup of tea. The most conspicuous are the large bright, redbilled Caspian Terns, an adult bird being invariably followed by a Juvenile producing an absurd clipping sound as it - as large as the parent it flies after. River terns and Blackballed Terns are both frequent very graceful and very direct and swift in flight. Slower and more deliberately cleaning the sand and mud, rather than the water is the very white looking, blackbilled Gull billed Tern, my favourite is the very charming, fairy like little Tern flickering and diving and fluttering over the scanning for small fish. Whiskered Terns appear to be casual on the Island, perhaps as brief birds of passage. I have yet to see the others oceanic Terns, and presume they keep more to the open Arabian Sea.

Pirotan has a resident population of Grey Herons which nest in late February on mangroves in the centre of the swamp. There is a large population of Reef Herons, white and grey. I have seen several individuals with white in the flight feathers and on a visit spotted one very light grey individual. Large and Lesser Egrets and Painted storks are all part of the Islands population and one tends to overlook the Pond Heron as it quietly feeds among the mangrove roots. One late evening we had a spectacular view of two Blacknecked storks lighted up by the slanting rays of the setting sun perfect for a breath taking photograph but alas no camera on hand! Spoon bills and white Ibis drop in periodically.

Snake birds are very plentiful and there are all three species of cormorants at times in very large numbers. Both the Dalmation and the Rosy Pelicans can be anticipated. This year the invariably two dozen or so flamingos P. ruber were missing. In September and March this Island would be an exciting location to observe migration both into India and West to East Africa. The congregation of waders on a large central mud area would be ideal for trapping them for banding. Last March I was able to see flocks of Demoiselle crane come in low over the land from Saurashtra to break formation and start circling to gain altitude prior to flying across the Gulf towards Kutch. I have seen Blue Rock Pigeons, Ring doves, Roseringed Parakeets and of all birds Black Drongos and Green Bee-eaters taking off from the Island straight across the

Gulf towards Kuch indicated by a line of cumulus clouds.

If Pirotan has been known across the subcontinent as a study area for marine life, if it has become famous as a focal point for the conservation of Coral Reefs and mangroves, it must be given a place among the great birding spots of the country as I am sure my young friend Taej Mundkur from Pune will enthusiastically corroborate.

Correspondence:

Acharva Dwarakanath on Goosin Moskwa Vehtpkoabu 628952 (14.1.1982): Goosin Moskwa found alive at about 3.30 pm near Hungarkatta, Udipi Taluk by one Mr. Ananda Kunder in mid-sea on the deck of a 36 footer fishing boat 'Matsya Jyothi'. The ring is being sent to BNHS. Provisionally identified as Sterna Sumatrana Black Napad Tern.

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Comments from Mr. Ullas Karanth on Sirkeer Cuckoo (8.1.82): We observed the Sirkeer Cuckoo in Rautana Katti area of Ranebennur Sanctuary. It was mid-day and we observed the bird for about 15 minutes. It would not tolerate a very close approach like the Koals. This area had tree cover of Hardwickia binata and good gram growth.

It is also listed as one of the birds present in Nagarhole Sanctuary though I have not seen it there.

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Comments from Mr. Jaykumar Khacher (Extract from letter) of 15.1.1982: I have just read through the December 1981 issue of the Newsletter. It is such luxury to read things written by others and to pontificate on what they write that I cannot resist making a few comments. On page 7, Dr. Ashok Kumar Sharma writes of the Little Bittern. The male of this little heron is very distinct with clear creamy white wings. He has no reason to doubt his identification as, besides, he has seen the bird in winter when this bird visits the plains. It is common on the Dal Lake of Kashmir. Dr. Sharma goes on to speak of the Pied Myna. This bird appears to be making a westward spread and having made an appearance at Jaipur causes me little surprise. It is interesting to record here that there is a rather flourishing colony in north Bombay - descendants from escapees perhaps.

In the correspondence section, page 15, Anuradha Singh's note on the Sirkeer Cuckoo is very interesting. This slow-moving, skulking cuckoo is quite plentiful in thorn, grass jungles and also inhabits cultivation along hedgegrows and sugarcane plantations. It builds its nest in trees usually so well concealed with climbers and other thick foliage that the chances are it is overlooked. The bird is rather undemonstrative and certainly avoids behaviour which would draw attention to itself. Its call is very characteristic and once heard and linked to the producer is a useful indicator of its presence. Anuradha does not seem to have noted the bright red bill and the black eye lashes of this singular bird.

It has been a pleasure to have extended hospitality to P.S. Thakkar of Ahmedabad and young Taj Mundker of Pune. Thakkar and I are working on a project utilising landstat imagery for pinpointing flamingo nesting in the great Rann. Mundker whose enthusiasm is infectious and helps cast away years, has promised to write on his exciting holiday in Saurashtra. Both these young persons are excellent fieldmen and must write regularly in the Newsletter even at the risk of having their identifications questioned by people like Humayun Abdul Ali (he questions my identifications on occasions) and myself.

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White-throated Munia nesting in association with nest of Storks by P.S. Thakker: Recently, I visited Sheelaj heronary on 20th May 1981 with Mr.B.M.Parasharya to see whether the breeding of little egret is in progress or not. With the help of a pair of binoculars we could see that the Night herons were sitting inside the nests and on the branches also. We thought that the nests were active and reached on the island after crossing the water around 6.45 pm and stayed there approximately one hour. We were astonished to know that the nests were all deserted ones.

On one of the trees we saw a white throated Munia and we looked for the nest of the bird. After a long search we saw a pair of Munia sitting outside the nest. They were active, at time - entering the nest and at time coming out of the nest. The nest was a grass ball with a side entrance associated with the nest of storks. The nest was attached with the sticks of the stork's nest on the lower side.

From literature it is learnt that the nests of white throated munia have frequently been found within the pile of sticks of forming nests of vulture or eagle or even an occupied one. The bird also use the disused nests of Baya birds. But I happened to see it for the first time in association with stork's nest.

aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa

About the distribution of birds by A.P.Gupta, Pratapnagar Rasulia, Hoshangabad 461002, M.P.: The distribution of some birds has always been a puzzle for me. The example that comes most readily to the mind is that of the pied Myna (*sturnus contra*). Dr. Ashok Kumar Sharma has written about it in the December 81 Newsletter, but from another angle. He says that the pied Myna is found on the outskirts of Jaipur but not inside the city. The occurrence of the bird is 100 miles west of the line drawn from Ambala to Hyderabad is undoubtedly of interest, but what I fail to understand is why the bird is NOT found in more places on the west of the line?

Bhopal is almost on the line drawn from Ambala to Hyderabad and the pied Myna is duly plentiful in and around Bhopal. But it is totally absent from places like Ujjain and Indore (and the surrounding areas) which are situated almost on the same latitude as Bhopal. The ecological conditions in these places 'west of the line' are not very different from those 'east of the line'. Many birds are common to both the areas. There is no physical barrier to the westward spread of these birds. Then what is it that confines the pied Myna to the east of the line? Will someone please explain?

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An Evolutionary Tale by T.V.Jose: This has reference to the title by Mr. William L. Wyle. I am one among those unfortunate many who have not understood how animals and plants have assumed their present form and how they continue to evolve. The writer tries to convince us that the changes take place through mutations. 'Some of the changes that mutations bring forth happen to be favourable to the organism and therefore those organisms survive while others succumb to their predators or such factors that kill them. The surviving ones transmit the newly acquired qualities to their offspring and thus a new form is established over the old'.

I wish evolution was so simple! This simplicity, however much I wish, fails to convince me and in its wake prods me to ask questions.

What is the cause of mutation? Is mutation purely 'accidental', mechanical, independent of the organisms' need vis-vis organisms' environment? If so, mutation is just a label attached to this kind of changes in organisms, not an explanation.....

If evolution is a tale, it is not a good tale to be told. It lacks the genuine qualities of a good tale. So let's handle it cautiously and even sparingly, for half-truths or fragmentary aspects of truth will not pass as truth itself.

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Editor: Zafar Futehally

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Rare

PLEASE REPORT TO NEAREST
FOREST OFFICER IF YOU SEE
THIS BIRD



Common

Jerdon's or
Doublebanded Courser

0 30 60 90 mm

Indian Courser

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Some additions and comments on the checklist of birds of Guindy Deer Park (Madras) by V. Santharam, 10, Leith Castle South St., Santhome, Madras 600028: I was delighted to see the checklist of birds of Guindy Park in the August 1981 issue of the Newsletter for Birdwatchers. During the last 3-4 years' of birding in and around Madras, I have visited the Park only a few times and I have been able to record only about 89 species of which 14 have not been recorded by Mr. Selvakumar and others.

Some common birds like the Pariah Kite, Loten's sunbird, Blyth's reed warbler etc. have been omitted altogether from Mr. Selvakumar's list. In addition I have recorded Little Egret, House Swift, Malay Bittern, Cormorant (little?), Red rumped swallow, Grey Drongo, Blacknaped blue flycatchers, treepie, yellow-throated sparrow and once the openbill stork and cattle egret in flight. Besides I have also seen some ducks, teals, harriers and 1-2 other unidentified raptors in flight.

The inclusion of the White-checked bulbul is perhaps an accident. The distribution of this species is restricted from the Himalayas to about Bombay in the south according to the 'Book of Indian Birds'. Also it would be a great help to the birdwatchers of Madras if the authors could provide more details regarding the sightings of the following uncommon birds mentioned in the list, so that we could understand more about their status in Guindy and its neighbourhood: 1) Northern Goshawk, 2) Common Green Pigeon, 3) Orphean Warbler, 4) Blue throated flycatcher 5) Yellow-backed sunbird, 6) Red turtle Dove 7) Tickell's flower-pecker, 8) Red winged crested cuckoo, 9) Barn owl and 10) Jungle Myna.

I have seen the Orange headed Ground Thrush in the Theosophical Society (see NLBW March-April 1981) and was glad to find it in the Guindy list. Sometime back Prof. K.K. Neelakantan had written to me saying that there were some other records of this species occurring in and around Madras and that it was believed to be a passage migrant here. In August-September, 1979, I had seen a Rufous Turtle Dove within the Theosophical Society grounds. (I hope Mr. Lavkumar Khacher may be able to recollect the sighting). I have not seen it since. I wonder if it has been recorded from Guindy Park.

I have observed Greenshanks, snipe, little stints, Black-winged stilts, Ring Doves, Black-capped Kingfisher, Skylarks, yellow-eyed babblers, Indian Wren-warblers and

Redstarts elsewhere around Madras, though not at Guindy. I am looking forward to see these at Guindy in future.

Till about a couple of years ago I had confused the Purple Sunbird and Loten's sunbird with each other and now after careful observations I have yet to identify the Purple sunbird inside the city, although I have seen it at Vandalur scrub jungle on 31.1.1981. The non-inclusion of Loten's sunbird in the Guindy list, therefore, may please be clarified.

Miscellany by S.Subramanya, Dept. of Entomology, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore -560024:

Further to the Jatinga saga: Elliot McClure's 'An Asian Bird-Bander's Manual' deals with a number of trapping methods for birds of varied habits. While going through it I came across a trapping method (pp.79-81) that involved the use of a phenomenon similar to the Jatinga Mystery.

The Sinipsips Method: In the Mountains of Luzon (Philippines) the Igorots developed a method of collecting birds which also involved the use of lights. Someone in the past noticed that on high ridges facing north, birds would flutter into their firelit camp on foggy nights in September and October. They refined this by making clearings just below the crests and by building small huts of bamboo with the north-side opening which was most effective in attracting birds on moonless foggy nights. Standing beside the hut with a large 'U' shaped handnet, these hill people could see the birds approaching and sweep them from the air.

At present this method is widely practiced among the farmers at Sinipsips, 7000ft altitude; at Dalton pass 3000 ft, in the central ranges. It has been further refined by replacing the bonfire with coleman or pressure lanterns supplied with reflectors to throw out a beam. This method is highly effective wherever birds pass during nocturnal migration. For example, in one evening in Dalton Pass in February the following species were recovered from ten netters:

Cinnomon Bittern, Greyfaced Buzzard, Blue-breasted Button Quail, Water Cock, Moorhen, Ruddy crane, Baillon's crane, Sooty Rail, Slaty-breasted Rail, White-browed Rail, Black-chinned Fruit Dove, Yellow-breasted Fruit Dove, Drongo cuckoo, Plaintive cuckoo, Bush lark, Great reed warbler, Grasshopper warbler, Flycatcher species, Philippines

starling and white-bellied Munia, totalling 151 birds and we did not know how many they had eaten or held back for food.

At the beginning of migration in September, the list was equally impressive: Cinnamon bitttern, Blue breasted button quail, Little brown quail, Bush hen, Water cock, Moorhen, White breasted rail, Slaty rail, Slaty-breasted Rail, Emerald Dove, Spotted Imperial Pigeon, Red Cuckoo Dove, Yellow-breasted Fruit Dove, Malay Cuckoo, Plaintive Cuckoo, Drongo Cuckoo, Brown Hawk Owl, Common Kingfisher, Ruddy Kingfisher, White-collard Kingfisher, Red-breasted Pitta, Pied Stonechat, Great Reed Warbler, Arctic Willow Warbler, Brown Shrike and Phillippines Glossy starling, totalling 123 birds.

It is strongly recommended that this method be tried on any crests of 2000 ft or higher over which it is suspected that migrant birds pass. In its simplest form the lantern is pointed towards the line of migration, and the netter stands behind it with his net. As a bird approaches he sweeps it from the air. A hut makes the work less stranuous. Since foggy, cold wet nights are fruitful a 40 ft mist net extended on the slope above or behind the netter would increase the take.'

(+ Igorots - various ethnic groups in the mountains of northern Luzon, Phillippines live in rugged grass lands and pine forest zones higher up.

+ McClure, E.H., 1966, An Asian Bird Banders Mannual, Migratory Animal Pathological Survey, P.O. Box 3443, Hongkong.)

Drought in Bangalore:The unusual rainfall pattern and the consequent drought between early July and mid August 1981, left the Hebbal lake with a shallow sheet of water, but enough to support a good number of waders and a few ducks. I visited the lake on 31st July, 3 and 30 August and 18 September 1981 and spent 60-90 minutes on each visit. The counts of different species is given below. With good showers, after the second week of August the water level slowly increased. The increasing depth of water reduced the number of waders and pumped in a new life to the scattered clumps of water hyacinth, which started drifting all over the lake soon afterwards.

Species	31 July 81	3 Aug. 81	30 Aug. 81	18 Sept. 81
Little Grebe	9	++	14	32
Little cormorant	3	37	5	-
Grey heron	11	3	-	-
Pond heron	10	++	++	++
Cattle egret	7	9	21	3
Large egret	1	-	-	-
Little egret	77	39	43	13
Lesser whistling teal	10	-	3	3
Spotbilled duck	9	3	4	6
Garganey	--	--	11	14*
Coot	--	--	--	57
Pheasant-tailed jacana	--	--	13	16
Redwattled lapwing	--	2	++	++
Black-tailed Godwit	--	--	1	--
Common Redshank	2(heard)	--	--	--
Greenshank	36	41	24	--
Green sandpiper	1	1	2	1*
Common sandpiper	1	2	2	3*
Blackwinged stilt	162	181	293	7*
River tern	--	--	4	2
Pied Kingfisher	6	6	4	6
Small blue kingfisher	1	2	++	3
White breasted kingfisher	--	--	++	2*
Total	346	326	443	167

++ Count not taken

* probably more were present

On 31 July, I think I sighted a Marsh sandpiper (Tringa stamatilus). This species has not been sighted in Bangalore before. Though I have watched many and ringed quite a few, I would still prefer to put a '?', for this 'fairer, smaller version of greenshank' which stood close to five greenshanks would not let me have a second glance as it took to wing along with its larger cousins when a House crow flew close overhead.

Baya nests on telegraph wires: I refer to the note by Smt. Kamala Venkataramani (NLBS 21 (9 and 10):18) expressing her surprise on seeing weaver birds (Ploecus philippinus) nesting on telegraph wires. This is a common sight in areas around Bangalore, especially if one travels by train either from Bangalore to Mysore or to Madras. Such nesting is partial to wet tracts where crops like sugarcane and paddy predominate. In most cases the nests are built in places where the wires pass directly above the standing crop of sugarcane or on sections of wires close to the plots, if they are situated further away. The birds show a preference to double lines, and if the poles carry more than four lines, such wires are usually avoided. The nests are built side by side, in a row, in batches of 2-10 nests (of course a few individual nests will also be scattered along the length of wire). One of the favourite position the nests occupy is that section of wire close to the top of telegraph poles, where the nests appear to be in a clump of 10-20. Occasionally, a few double nests can also be seen.

There seem to be four possible reasons for this nesting habit of bayas:

First, the ease with which the birds can get nesting material (the margin of sugar cane leaves) available readily and in abundance. The duration of the cane crop is 10-14 months and is planted in either of the three seasons viz., July-August, October-November, January-February, hence the crop is certain to be present during the breeding season.

Second, sugarcane and paddy are grown in the same tract side by side. The farmers either go in for a single crop of cane or 3 crops of irrigated paddy in a year or may portion their meager holdings between the two crops. This means an abundant food supply (animal matter, chiefly insects during breeding season and vegetable matter - weed and paddy seeds during non-breeding season) for the bayas.

Third, for bayas, sugarcane fields are one of the favourite haunts for roosting during the non-breeding season and to

some extent during the breeding season too. Here, they roost along with wagtails and other finches. (to trap a roosting flock of bayas, there is no better place than a cane field!).

Lastly, this habit of nesting may also be to ward off potential predators. Terrestrial predators like snakes and lizards seldom climb the erect smooth surfaced telegraph poles, which I think is the only way they can get to the hanging nests.

A Day at Nalsarovar water bird sanctuary by S.Gauriar, Sr.Superintendant of Post Offices, Anand Division, Anand 380001: Nalsarovar lake, a shallow body of water, stretching over several Sq.Kms. is only 65 Kms. away from Ahmedabad via. Sanand, connected by a motorable road. The water is nowhere very deep and is interspersed with small patches of land which provide excellent nesting sites for myriads of water birds. The lake is also richly infested with weeds, like, Eleocharis Sp. Cyperus Sp., Eleocharis crassipes, Species of Nymphaea and Nelumbium and so on. The weeds, insects and tiny fishes and crustaceans provide food for the birds.

I had the privilege of visiting the sanctuary in late winter this year. The largest flocks of birds that I saw were of coot, avocet, blackwinged stilt, ducks (pintail, wigeon, gadwall, mallard and shoveller), demoiselle crane, teals (common teal, lesser whistling teal, gargany or blue winged teal), rosy pelican, brown headed gulls and flamingoes.

Description of the birds of the sanctuary would be incomplete if I do not mention the innumerable pipits, several species of wagtails, shrikes and rosy pastors, Cormorants, which are common elsewhere in similar settings were conspicuous by their absence.

Below is the list of birds seen:

LIST OF BIRDS ARRANGED FAMILY WISE

PODICIPITIFORMES

1. Little Grebe or Dabchick : (Podiceps ruficollis)

PELICANIDAE

1. Rosy pelican : (Pelicanus species)

ARDEIDAE

1. Pond heron : (Ardeola grayii)
 2. Little egret : (Egretta garzetta)
 3. Cattle egret : (Bubulcus ibis)

CICONIIDAE

1. Black necked stork : (Xenorhynchus asiaticus)
 2. White stork : (Ciconia ciconia)
 3. White necked stork : (C. episcopus)

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

1. Black Ibis : (Pseudibis papillosa)
 2. White Ibis : (Threskiornis melanocephala)

PHOENICOPTERIDAE

1. Flamingo : (Phoenicopterus roseus)

ANATIDAE

1. Mallard : (Anas platyrhynchos)
 2. Pintail : (A. acuta)
 3. Wigeon : (A. penelope)
 4. Gadwall : (A. strepera)
 5. Shoveller : (A. clypeata)
 6. Common teal : (A. crecca)
 7. Gargany or blue winged teal : (A. querquedula)
 8. Lesser whistling teal : (Dendrocygna javanica)

GRUIDAE

1. Demoiselle crane : (Anthropoides virgo)
 2. Sarus crane : (Grus antigone)

RALLIDAE

1. Coot : (Fulica atra)

JACANIDAE

1. Pheasant tailed jacana : (Hydrophasianus chirurgus)
 2. Bronze winged jacana : (Metopidius indicus)

CHARADRIDAE

1. Little ringed plover : (Charadrius dubius)
 2. Redwattled lapwing : (Vanellus indicus)
 3. Yellow wattled lapwing : (V. malabaricus)

SCOLOPACIDAE

1. Wood or spotted sandpiper : (Tringa glariola)
2. Little stint : (Calidris minutus)
3. Common or fantail snipe : (Capella gallinago)

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

1. Avocet : (Recurvirostra avosetta)
2. Black winged stilt : (Himantopus himantopus)

LARIDAE

1. Brown headed gull : (Larus brunnicephalus)
2. River tern : (Sterna aurantia)

Untypical Behaviour by Thomas Gay, 122/4-A Erandavane, Poona 411004: The following random observations, made recently in or near Poona, are reported because they show a deviation from typical recorded behaviour.

Cliff Swallow: Just after Christmas, a grand-daughter and I stayed for five days in a house on the slopes of Haraneshwar Hill above Talegaon Dabhade. Every morning, when we got up, we would see Salim Ali's 'long close-packed lines' of Cliff Swallows sunning themselves on the transmission wires near the house. I estimated the birds on the wires to number about 2000, with perhaps another 200 or so wheeling and hawking in the air. All quite proper and normal. But at the same time we would see not less than 100 swallows actually sitting on the ground only a short distance from the wires. This ground was sloping (making a take-off easy, of course) and covered in short grass. Most but not all the birds were seated on a patch of black where the grass had been burned. Are there any other records of swallows congregating on the ground like this? I have not found any mention of such behaviour.

King Crow or Black Drongo: This bird is well known to be a 'loner'. Normally, it is seen in the plural only (a) in the case of a family party, or (b) when something like a small forest fire attracts a number of Drongos to a rich feast of disturbed grasshoppers confined to a limited area. However, one day during the above-mentioned holiday, we saw nine King Crows beside the road, all within a very few feet of each other; some on the ground, some on the

strut of a telegraph pole, some flying between these two points. They did not seem to be feeding on anything, and resembled a group of neighbours gathered for a chat. (Being rather pressed for time, we did not stop to investigate as good Bird-watchers ought to have done.) The Talegaon area consists chiefly of billowing hills which yield a fine crop of grass; hence it is a paradise for Drongos. Have any readers seen more than nine Drongos together except at a forest fire?

Crow Pheasant: Every morning, about 8 am, I scatter crumbs of chupatti in one corner of our terrace roof. My usual guests are House Sparrows, Common and Brahminy Mynas, Red-vented Bulbuls, and an occasional Magpie and Indian Robin. (Crows are discouraged by the mere display of my air rifle; if they are allowed to come, the smaller birds leave in fear). Twice within the last week (20 to 27 January) a crow pheasant has attended the feast, stalking up and down and picking up crumbs for some five minutes. I have not been able to discover any other record of a crow pheasant taking vegetarian food. Has any other reader noticed such behaviour? If this bird continues to accept my innocent crumbs, I shall begin to understand what it must be like to reclaim a Chambal dacoit.

Malabar whistling thrush near Madanapalle by Girish Ananth, Rishi Valley School, A.P.: Our readers would perhaps like to know of our unusual sighting of two species of Thrushes close to Rishi Valley School, near Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh.

The Malabar Whistling Thrush (*Myophonus horsfieldii*) was seen five kilometers East of Rishi Valley School, two kilometers West of the Madanapalle-Ananthapur Highway. This area is hilly and rocky. The undulating terrain is extensively cultivated. Where the cultivation has not encroached, the characteristic scrub-jungle of the Deccan Plateau still prevails. Dr. Salim Ali has mentioned that the bird frequents the Shevaroy Hills, which are about 150 km from Rishi Valley. Considering the habitat and the occurrence of this bird outside its range we felt that the observation was worthy of publication.

We also have a doubtful observation on the Blue Headed Rock Thrush (*Monticola cinclorhynchus*). Our field notes are: head, neck, back and wings - blue black; primaries orange chestnut. Bird of Bulbul size. Much larger than Redstart. We are sure that the bird was not a Redstart

because, the tail was not being wagged in the manner of a Redstart. The bird was feeding actively on the ground.

We feel the bird may be a Blue Headed Rock Thrush. Both the birds were seen close to a stream which led to a small shallow tank. I would welcome comments.

Magpie Robbins in Combat by V.K.Sivakumar, Bank of Baroda, 73, North Street, Melattur 614301: Melattur is about 18 km from Thanjavur (Tamilnadu), and has a few pockets of groves and several small tanks. During the third week of September 81 observed an interesting territorial quarrel between two male Magpie Robins adjacent to a village pond. The territory in question was a heap of village rubbish, mounted in a small pit and the entire quarrel lasted for about an hour.

Initially the 'rightful owner' was pecking at the heap (probably the scarabid beetle grubs) and the intruder flew down from a nearby tree and landed near the pit. The owner permitted the 'foreigner' to roam around and near about the pit but whenever it entered the pit, where the dirt mound is present, it flew at the intruder and chased it away. In about 10-15 minutes the newcomer developed enough courage to enter the pit in spite of the protests from the other. Then as the 'owner' saw that the 'new arriver' had no intention of going out, it suddenly flew from the top of the heap and landed right in front of the 'foreigner'. The subsequent argument consisted of demonstrations only and at no time did the birds come into physical contact. The demonstrations consisted of hopping with jerks, strutting, threatening screeches, frizzling of feathers, dropping down the wings etc. For every advance of the rightful owner the other retreated. When the bird returned back to the heap, the intruder again made vain attempts to enter the pit and the process was repeated, a few times. Finally the new arriver flew away.

A few words about the heap may be of interest. The diameter of the shallow pit was about 6 feet and the heap was spread in about 3 feet diameter. The peculiarity of allowing the rival, upto its periphery and not allowing it to enter the pit, which is only about 30 square feet, has intrigued me very much.

My further investigation of the mound of garbage revealed nothing but a few grubs and maggots. Some of our readers might be in a position to explain the reason for guarding a small piece of area instead of a fairly large territory of 'its' own.

Why Woodpeckers don't need helmets by A.Dwarkanath, Nath-Villa, Aijarakadu, Udupi: Do woodpeckers suffer from headaches? Probably not, according to people who worry about the problem. If they did, the birds would presumably stop slamming their beaks into trees hundreds of times a day. Still Researchers from the Brentwood Veterans Administration Hospital in California and the Neuropsychiatric Institute at UCLA decided to find out why the countryside was not littered with dazed and dying woodpeckers.

Led by psychiatrist Philip May, the research team used high-speed filming techniques to measure the trajectory, impact velocity, and deceleration of an acorn woodpecker's head as it hammered into a tree trunk. The bird, grounded by a wing injury, was living in a ranger's office at a California State Park. May and his colleagues say the clatter of a typewriter was enough to set the woodpecker banging away on a tree trunk in the office.

Analysis of film shot at speeds up to 2,000 frames per second revealed that the woodpecker's beak slammed into the trunk at speeds of 20 to 23 feet a second, about 15 miles per hour. One complete peck took one thousandth of a second or less, creating an impact deceleration on the order of 1,000 G. One G. is the acceleration needed to overcome the earth's gravity. An astronaut in a Saturn V rocket experienced only 3.5 G during lift-off.

The researchers discovered that woodpeckers blink for a few milliseconds as their beak is about to hit the tree. This may protect the eye from chips or simply keep it in its socket during repeated sharp decelerations. The bird also makes a few practice jabs before really letting go something like an amateur carpenter lining up a nail.

Several physical factors act to protect the woodpecker's brain during all this pounding. The brain is very light, weighing less than an ounce, and it is tightly packed into a brain case of tough spongy bone. Sets of opposed muscles may have a shock absorber effect.

According to the California researchers, the most important element may be the precise trajectory the bird's head follows as it strikes at the wood. The woodpecker pecks in a straight line. This protects it by rotational or angular motion, such as the arc described by an arm swinging a pick. In addition, May and his colleagues observed that the woodpecker keeps its neck tense at the moment of

impact the way a boxer does when preparing for a punch he knows is coming but cannot block.

The researchers believe their findings have direct implications for the design of safety helmets. Helmets should be thicker and lighter, made of firm shock-absorbing foam with a thin outer layer of a harder material to spread the impact and resist puncture. Ideally, there should be some form of neck brace. The researchers even speculate that the high collars of old-fashioned military uniforms might have had a practical justification in this sense.

They advise the person who discovers that he is about to smash his head into something to tighten the muscles of the neck and hold it flexed in the chin-down position. That is to say, if you find you must bang your head on a tree, try to do it the way a woodpecker does.
-James Hansen in Science 80.

Feb.82 Chandamama English Edition. NEWS FLASH
page 7 second column.

THE UNKNOWN BIRD: It measures five metres with wings spread and weighs 1 kg. It belongs to the eagle family. Nothing more is known about it. Ornithologists are surprised that such a bird ever existed. Caught in Darnang the bird is now in Gauhati Zoo.-EXTRACT-

From a letter from Taej Mundkar to Lavkumar Khacher dt.21.3.82:
Last year I had sent you a snap or two of a pair of Magpie Robins nesting in an open-fronted nest box in a Jamun tree. Well, this year a pair of Indian Robins started taking an interest in it and began collecting material to furnish the box. I had left last year's nesting material in the box and they just added to it. In a few days the female laid two eggs but not before a pair of Magpie Robins gave them hell, attacking them constantly. I was quite surprised that the robins established occupancy. An amazing thing was that every day when the robins fought, two male sparrows would flank the female Indian Robin. Even when she flew into another branch driven away by the magpies the two sparrows flew after her and landed one on each side of her. It was fun to watch them fight for the nest site though the behaviour of the bachelor sparrows stumped me. This fight continued for three days or so and every day the female was flanked by these two sparrows!

At about the same time I put in another nest box, in between a few branches of a Caesalpineae tree about six feet off the ground. After three days I found that the first nest box was not being incubated and the female robin was nowhere in sight. So I climbed up and was dismayed to find no eggs; even the nest material was missing.

I then checked the new nest box. You can imagine my surprise when I found two robin eggs snugly resting among a nest of fibres and feathers. Could the eggs and nesting material have been transferred? The distance between the two nest boxes is at least 50 feet.

Even after vacating the disputed nest box the battles with the magpies have not ceased and the two continue to harass the robins. I shoo away the Magpie Robins whenever I hear them screaming agitatedly. The magpies have not taken up their now vacated old nest yet. On a couple of occasions I saw Crow Pheasant at the open nest box in the Jamun tree. Could he have eaten the eggs of the robins?

Then there is another equally amusing incident. Between these two nest boxes is a casuarina tree in which a pair of purple-rumped sunbirds built a nest. As I was unable to borrow a camera to photograph the whole event I have drawn the nest in various stages of its development.

This nest was, for some unknown reason, abandoned after completion. A few days later I heard a female purple-rumped sunbird on the nest. The bird was not building it or nesting in it but she was actually pulling out pieces of it and flying off in a direction which I haven't been able to follow. Actually it flies in the direction of Mr. Thomas Gaye's house which is about ten metres from ours. I have only been able to see the female (not the male) working on the nest or destroying it and transferring the material.

One evening I had gone to Katraj Ghat with Noshervan Sethna who had come for two days. At dusk we saw a Crested Serpent Eagle on an electric pole. As we got closer it took off and landed close by, so we approached it again. It took off and landed close by once again. I guess it was reluctant to fly off because it was dusk. It was then quite dark and we were returning when we flushed two birds from a small water hole. We could not make what they were but suspected they were partridges though they appeared slightly smaller, and had shorter legs. We froze in our tracks and

some more of these birds circled us and landed not even 25 ft away. It was too dark to look through my 8x35 so we had to use Nosh's 7x50. I could make out two black stripes across the head and a band on the breast. Checking our 'Salim Ali' we identified the birds as painted Sandgrouse. This is the second time that this sandgrouse has been recorded recently near Poona. Last year in early March, Shreekant Ingelhaliker photographed one in this very same spot!

A few days later I returned with a friend of mine, Avadhut Bapat. At 6.55 pm at the same water hole we lay hidden and were rewarded by a bird that came and landed on a rise near the water. From its look-out post it kept calling; chirik chirik chirik. Suddenly pairs of sandgrouse materialised from the darkening skies. They landed a foot or so from the water, ran to it for a quick drink and then ran up the opposite rise for a dust bath. They did this by scratching their legs in the loose dust and pushing themselves into it. Occasionally they would peck at something. In all, we were able to count 9 birds. The 9th replaced the first by landing close to it and then running up to it as though to take over the vigil. The first bird then ran over to the water's edge and drank. At 7.07 pm they all flew off together and we hurried home.

I will end here with a little about two nesting dabchicks that I found; the first I have ever seen. We found the nest on the river Mutha; a small pad in a little pool of water with some reeds. The nest had two eggs. When the incubating bird left the nest she covered the eggs by pulling leaves and soddy water reeds to completely hide the eggs. At present the river has a number of young dabchicks. The second nest I saw was in the lake at the Peshwe Park Zoo and had four eggs.

Correspondence

Tapes of Bird Calls by T.V. Jose, Flat No. 34/671 MHB
New Siddharth nagar, Goregaon (West), Bombay 400062:
 From the readers of NL I would like to know where I can buy taped songs of birds. I mean by birds songsters like Magpie Robin, Shama, Lark, Large Pied Wagtail and Chloropsis. I am particularly interested in subsongs. If any readers have them and are ready to give me on loan or for money, they are welcome. Please write to my address.

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Sanctuary for the great Indian Bustard by Mrs. Jamal Ara, Ranchi: Two sanctuaries are being set up in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh for the protection of the Great Indian Bustard - a fast disappearing species. The sanctuary at Ghatigaon, spread over 512 km of hilly tracts and forests has been formally opened and the second one at Karera will be opened soon. The Bustards, commonly known as Son Chillya usually appear during the rainy season in these areas.

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Report on Maharashtra Bird Lovers Conference by Prakash Garde, 27, Dindayal Nagar, Nagpur 440 002:

I am happy to inform you that the second Maharashtra Bird Lovers' Conference was conducted at Nagpur from 31st January to 2nd February 1982. Over 50 Bird-lovers from all over Maharashtra, participated in the programme.

Among the events (slide shows, talks and discussions) the most interesting was a talk on the efforts to conserve the Siberian Cranes (accompanied by slide show) by Dr. George Archibald, Director, International Crane Foundation, who specially flew from Bombay to Nagpur to attend the meet on Shri Gole's invitation.

Among the resolutions passed by the Conference, the following deserve special mention:

1. The White Breasted King Fisher should be declared as the 'State Bird' of Maharashtra. A recommendation to this effect be submitted to the Government of Maharashtra.
2. 12th November, the Birthday of Dr. Salim Ali should be declared as 'Bird Day' and should be celebrated as such throughout the country.
3. A recommendation should be made to the Government of India to issue a postal stamp to commemorate the first 'Bird Day' falling on 12th November 1982.

The conference honoured Shri Madhavrao Patil of Paoni Village near the famous Navegaon Bandh, popularly known as the 'Jim Corbett of Vidarbha', of his valuable contributions to the conservation effort in the Navegaon National Park area. He was presented with a Shawl and coconut on this occasion.

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II International Symposium on Pheasants by
Dr. Suresh Singh, Administrator, WPA-Division of
Parasitology, Indian Veterinary Research Institute,
Izatnagar, U.P. 243122: Some time back I had suggested
 to you that the NLBW should publish the more important
 proceedings of the CITES meeting that was held last year.
 I am sure it would be of interest to many of the readers.

I am glad to inform you that the II International
 Symposium on Pheasants is being organised by the World
 Pheasant Association (based in UK). It is due to be
 held from Sept.19 to 21, 1982 at Srinagar(Kashmir). We
 expect about 150 foreign and Indian delegates to attend
 and some very interesting papers will be presented and
 discussed. There will also be a demonstration of
 censusing techniques for pheasants to be given by
 Dr. Anthony J. Gaston of Canadian Wildlife Service and
 Dr. B.S. Lamba of the Zoological Survey of India at the
 Dachigam Sanctuary.

I have been given the responsibility of organising and
 mounting an exhibition of photographs and original
 paintings and posters showing the wildlife of India,
 specially the Galliformes.

I shall feel much obliged if you will kindly print this
 in the NLBW for favour of information to your readers who
 may like to either attend the symposium or to give us
 suitable exhibits. We will take good care of
 the exhibits and return them promptly after the exhibition
 is over.

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Behaviour of a Rock Pigeon by Siraj A. Taher, Road No:1,
Baniara Hills, Hyderabad 500034: In the Newsletter of
 May 1981, Mr. Aasheesh Pittie mentions the strange
 behaviour of a Blue Rock Pigeon (Columba livia).

I feel this behaviour could be a breeding display flight
 of the bird. The male usually indulges in this display
 in the presence of a female which might not have been
 visible to Mr. Pittie from where he was ERIC SIMMS, in
 his excellent book on Pigeons and Doves, - 'The Public
 Life of The Street Pigeon' (Hutchinson - London),
 describes a similar behaviour of the Wood Pigeon (Columba
elphinstonii-Sykes) while in display flights. He writes
 'The bird climbs steeply in the air, sets its wings in

the horizontal plane, appears to stall and glides down before repeating the whole cycle again'. Elsewhere in the book he writes about a similar behaviour by the Rock Pigeon - '----Its wings are beaten more slowly and through a wider arc than usual unit it launches itself into a glide on a more or less horizontal plane. Now the tail is slightly spread and the wings given positive dihedral --that is, they are raised above the horizontal. The bird, rocking itself slightly about its axis, then glides down, either to land or to continue its flight!

An alternate explanation of the behaviour of Mr. Pitties' Pigeon, could be that it was an ornamental pigeon, either the 'Tumbler' or the 'Roller'. The 'Roller' called the 'Lotun' in Urdu is very much similar to the rock pigeon in shape in colour. These birds execute a **series of somersaults while in flight** and before each somersault, stall for a second or so.

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Reef Herons in Poona by Avadhut Bapat, 640, Sadashiv Peth, R.B.Kumthekar Road, Pune 411030: This year, as in the last few years 2 or 3 Reef Herons (Egretta gularis) have been seen spending the winter months in Pune. According to the Handbook Vol.I the Reef Heron is described as a bird of the sea shore and mangrove swamps. I would be grateful if any of the readers could enlighten me on the reason for their presence so far inland, the only previous record being in Hyderabad. Since the 1st of March 1982, I have been observing a single Reef Heron spending the entire day along the reedy edges of the river Mutha that flows behind the Abasaheb Garware College, Pune. White winglets contrasting well with its uniformly slate grey body are well marked in flight. Interesting is its style of feeding. It stands crouched, motionless and suddenly shoots out its bill to catch its quarry, which it shakes in its large yellow bill before swallowing.

During the day it keeps to itself away from the other birds but at dusk it gathers with the little, cattle, median, and large egrets to roost on the large trees in the crematorium that lies on the bank of the river not more than 100 yards away from its daily feeding ground.

The number of little cormorants (Phalacrocorax niger) has shown a dramatic increase in the last month, feeding in the river behind the college, quite unafraid.

Last month when we visited Matoba lake near Yavat, 51 kms. from Pune, we came across a surprising sight. A juvenile Painted Stork (Mycteria leucocephala) was feeding along with seven White necked Storks (Ciconia episcopus). When disturbed it took off with the group of White Necked Storks giving us the impression that they had adopted the young one. It stood out from the group differing in the colour of its breast and small size. The breast colour being dusky white while the White necked Storks sported black ones.

Would some one please explain this strange behaviour?

An article by Mr. Prakash Gole and Mr. Taej Mundkur in the Newsletter for Birdwatchers Sept./Oct. 1980 explained the rare discovery of a nest of the Red-wattled Lapwing (Vanellus indicus) on a two-storeyed college building. Last year there were two nests on two different buildings of the college. There was also another nest on a two-storeyed apartment building about 250 meters away as the lapwing flies. The two buildings are similar in that they both have bitumen tar felt roofs with pebbles. This year too they have begun using the pebbles as nesting material. The fact that they seem to have taken refuge on the roof tops clearly indicates the mass destruction of their natural habitat.

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Editor : Zafar Futehally

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Newsletter for Birdwatchers

VOL. XXII

NO. 5 & 6

MAY - JUNE 1982



Rare

PLEASE REPORT TO NEAREST
FOREST OFFICER IF YOU SEE
THIS BIRD



Common

Jerdon's or
Doublebanded Courser

Indian Courser

0 30 60 90 mm

NEWSLETTER
FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. XXII

No.5 and 6

May-June 1982

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Editorial

I must apologise to the subscribers of the Newsletter for the delay in the production of the May and June issues. The frequent change of stenos has led to a total confusion in my records and also in the material received from various sources. I hope that I will be able to organise things better from August onwards.

As a result of the fact that the Newsletter has been sent out so irregularly in the past few months, the number of articles which have come in have also dwindled. But I hope that now with the assurance that the medium is alive, our readers will be induced to send in their comments, short notes and articles. As I have said so earlier reviews of books and extracts of relevant articles from other journals are very useful.

The monsoon has started well in the Dodda Gubbi area and we have already had 8 inches of rain, but there is no sign of the Pied Crested Cuckoo. It will be interesting to get reports about this bird from other regions.

Adventures with a nesting box by Ajana, Canary Hill Road, Hasaribagh P.O. and District, Bihar: Some time before the 26th of March, 1982 I had noticed a pair of Indian Robins building a nest in the corner of a window-sill but, on that day at about 8 am. the male came to a nesting-box which I had hung up on the verandah last year, and which had not been used at that time, calling with a series of 'sweet, sweet' notes as though to encourage inspection by the female.

In due course the female landed on the box, did not enter, and flew off after three or four minutes. At 10 am. however, she again visited it and was closely followed by the male carrying nesting material. During the next twenty minutes the male made nine trips sometimes calling as above and sometimes entering the nesting-box where he made soft 'kissing' noises. At 10.30 am. the female yet again turned up but as before flew off.

About 12.30 pm both male and female arrived and the former scratched about inside while the latter perched outside. Later, the male again entered and was closely followed by the female. He left, called from the roof, then returned with some nesting material. At 1.15 pm

he once more came to the nesting box calling chirrupingly. Although the female was near by she flew off towards the original nesting site by the window.

By the next day, however, differences of opinion must have been resolved for from 7.40 am. Until 2 pm nesting activity was brisk. The male made forty-six trips and the female forty-two. Collection of material was done from near by and sometimes settling and sometimes could be heard coming from inside the nesting box. When both birds met inside, the male only, I think, emitted the soft 'kissing' noises mentioned earlier.

Up till the 4th of April the pattern of behaviour was similar to the above but less material appeared to be carried and the male generally seemed to take the initiative in promoting work. Incidentally, I dismantled the first nest and found it to be a veritable labour of love. It was composed of 130 leaves, 658 light twigs and rootlets varying in size from 1" - 6" and 150 oddments comprised of flower heads, pieces of dried mud and so on. In all it weighed almost 150 grammes. Then at about 10 am the female entered the nesting box and stayed for half an hour. Investigation showed that three eggs had been deposited although if all at the one time I am unable to say. When the female flew off and returned ten minutes later she was followed by the male. He looked inside the box then immediately flew off. Only to return five minutes later when he went right inside and made his very happy-sounding 'kissing' noises.

On the 5th of April panic occurred when the female entered the nesting box but flew out at once making obviously distressed croaking calls. For some time she actually hovered, tail down, close by. At this, the male, who must have been on the roof, put in an appearance but did not enter the nesting-box; he seemed more puzzled than alarmed. Quite some time afterwards the female returned to sit on the eggs. I later found out that there were still three of them, each about 3/4" long, oval, pale green and covered with reddish-brown spots; these being more marked and dense at the blunted ends. All I can suppose is that a lizard had gone inside the box - with deprecation in view? - as I did chase one out on another occasion. For the next ten days both birds visited the nesting-box very roughly about once every half-hour. The male only rarely entered it and the female stayed in it at night and for periods of up to twenty minutes during the day.

On the 15th of April the eggs successfully hatched out and both male and female visited together when again the happy 'kissing' noises were to be heard. The male also chirruped from inside the nesting-box, sat on it and sang before eventually flying off. Then started a feeding pattern which worked out to a visit by one or other of the parents every ten minutes. Later this increased to one visit approximately every four minutes; presumably as the nestlings increased their size and food intake.

Unfortunately, from the 19th of April onwards the female was seen no more and I wondered what would become of the young ones. Had she succumbed to a semi-resident Shikra, Woman's Lib or some other such fate? The male seemed equally perplexed and sorrowful but he kept up with the busy four minute schedule of feeding most heroically. There was no energy to spare for his customary cheery greeting on arrival at the nesting-box each time, however.

By the 28th of April the three nestlings resembled little, grey mice huddling together and despite a spell of unexpectedly cold weather managed to survive. Weather the female would have remained in the nesting-box at night during such a time I cannot say but the male did not do so. Increasingly, the three small birds became more demanding in their requests for food, made ever louder noises, moved around in the nesting-box and eventually crowded around its entrance ever eager to be fed.

Their inaugural flights apparently took place early on the morning of the 1st of May but by the time I got there only a few bird droppings were to be seen under the site of the nesting-box while inside were a few downy feathers and more droppings.

Being involved in other affairs I cannot say that I have noticed the young trio in the garden - would not some further training and care have been necessary? - but the male I often see on one of his customary perches. Indeed, only a few days ago, on the 16th of May, I saw him bring another prospective mate for inspection purposes. I had not cleared out the old nesting material wondering what, if anything, would further develop. Now both male and female turn up at odd times carrying small twigs etc. to add to or to renovate the still-existing nest. Or possibly these are mere token gestures.

There is more that could be told but I will conclude by saying that this was the first time I did ever watched birds nesting and that I found the daily rituals and crises of absorbing interest. Why not try installing a nesting-box yourself?

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Some rare encounters by V.Santharam. 10. Leith Castle South Street. Santhome. Madras 600028:

Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*): This summer, we had the Avocets and the flamingoes staying with us quite late. The Avocets were here till 21st June, 1981 and the flamingoes were observed till 1st July, 1981. There were 3-4 flamingoes, feeding in the shallow waters of the estuary mostly on the southern side and at times between the northern banks and the river mouth. In this party of flamingoes, there was a lesser flamingo. This was first noticed on 16th June. When feeding along with the others, this bird was noticeably smaller in size and the body height was about that of the height of the legs of the Greater Flamingo. The beak was definitely dark in colour (as was observed on a later date when it flew closer). It kept among its cousins and the little egrets, though occasionally straying away and feeding alone. Once or twice it was seen singly, feeding in the middle of the river, all alone. I could not judge whether it was more pinkish than the other species as on most days the weather was dull and the smaller size and darker beak suggested it was the lesser flamingo, unless it was an immature *Phoenicopterus roseus* (PS: I have seen it in January, 1982 again at Estuary).

Eastern Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*): On 18th June, 1981, at about 5.45 pm as I was out on a stroll in the open meadow covered with some small shrubs at Adyar Estuary, along with Mr. R.V. Mohan Rao, we noticed a movement in one of the plants ahead of us. Moving closer, we noticed a small brown bird with markings and my first impression was that it was a young lark or pipit (as that was the height of the breeding season). But a closer look with binoculars revealed that the bird was a Warbler. The bird was quite small in size- smaller than a sparrow and slimmer. The upper parts were pale brownish with darkish streaks, pale yellowish white under parts- with no streaks

(as far as I could see), a pale supercilium, flesh coloured legs and a brownish tail. It was quite confiding and allowed us to approach within about 7-8 feet. It was very active and moved quickly about on the ground and amongst the bushes, neck telescoped. It was equally active among the branches and it flitted from one branch to another rapidly. It called two or three times and was promptly replied by another from another part of the meadow. The call was a faint 'tschuck' not unlike that of the Blyth's Reed Warbler. After a while it was flushed out of the shrubs and after 2-3 minutes, it emerged out and started flying in a south-westerly direction, calling as it rose in the air. The flight was slightly undulating. It was presently joined by a couple of others and together they rose quite high up and disappeared from view. Hand book (Volume 8) tells that the autumn migration in this species takes place in September and the spring migration in April and early May. There is also a record of a specimen obtained from Sikkim in June. Yet it was quite surprising to find these birds staying back in South India as late as mid-June.

Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*): It was on 13.8.79 that I had seen my first Oystercatcher at the Adyar Estuary. I had been awaiting a chance to encounter this lovely, rare visitor for quite sometime now and at last my patience had borne fruit. Although seen only in flight, the unmistakable wingbar, black and white plumage gave away its identity at once. Again, quite recently, I had the luck in spotting this wader here. On 23rd August, 1981, I saw another of this species flying low over the water and settle down near the water edge on the bund across the river mouth. It had a quick evening bath, preened and flew inland over the river, uttering its characteristic piping calls. Again on 4th September it was there on a sandbar some 250 yards away from me and in the brilliant evening sunlight I clearly saw the long red bill and pinkish legs. The back was more brownish (though the head and neck were black). There was a white band

across the throat, suggesting that the bird was immature. It was seen moving a few steps, watching and probing into the soft, squelchy mud for food for sometime. Then it remained still for about ten minutes, resting on one leg. Suddenly it let out a call and took wing and moved over to the other banks. Later in the same evening it was seen flying near the seashore.

Frigate Bird (*Fregata* spp.): Coming across frigate birds

in Madras does not seem to be a very tough task judging from the number of sightings in the recent years. As reported in September 1979 issue of the 'Newsletter', the first sighting in the recent years (as far as I know) was by Mr. Koneri Rao on 25th September 1978. Later, I saw it on 11th October 1978 at Adyar Estuary. The next sighting to come to my attention was by Mr. Vivek Kunte (reported in May 1980 issue of 'Newsletter') who happened to see this bird near Theosophical Society, Adyar on 29.2.1980. Recently, some two months back a friend came out with a description of a bird seen by him which could be none other than a Frigate bird. The latest sighting was made by myself on 12th September 1981 near my house.

On that morning, at about 7.15 am., as I was sitting out on the verandah, I noticed a large bird floating in the air coming straight towards in the direction of my house. At first I thought it was the Pariah Kite and almost ignored it, when it suddenly turned about giving a view of its underparts and I caught sight of a white patch on the abdomen and a long, deep-forked tail. In another second I was back with my binoculars to look at this Man O' War bird. I briefly noted that it also had a whitish head and throat and also the long, thin, hooked bill. The size was slightly bigger than that of a Pariah Kite and including the long tail and beak, it could have been around 30-35 inches in length. Unfortunately there was not even a crow in sight to judge the size! But for the white portion, the bird was entirely black and the wings were long, narrow and pointed. My consultations with the reference books including Stuart Baker's 'Fauna of British India' (Vol. VI) did not help to identify the species. From what I gather, I believe this could be an immature Christmas Island Frigate bird (*Fregata andrewsi*). My earlier sighting in 1978 was also brief and the species was doubtfully identified. Now I have realised that identifying a Frigate bird, especially an immature bird is much difficult than sighting one.

Rosy Pastor (*Sturnus roseus*): The field guides say that the rosy pastor is rather an uncommon visitor in South India and that it visits Ceylon irregularly and sparingly. I have so far come across this migrant twice along the South East Coast. The first time I saw it was at the Scrub Jungle of Pt. Calimere Sanctuary (Tanjore district, Tamilnadu) on 18th January, 1980. There was a flock of some 30-40 birds along with Common Mynas and 1-2 Greyheaded Mynas. These were seen on the ground and appeared to be

wary, ascending the trees as we approached closer. I next saw them on 15.2.1981 at the scrub jungle adjoining the Nellapattu Pelicanry, Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh, some 100 kms. north of Madras. The flock numbered about 70-80 birds, flying from one bush to another along with Common Mynas. These also seemed to be very shy and wary. On both the occasions I found that the rose colour was much paler than illustrated. These two sightings make me wonder if the rosy pastors migrate along the S.E. coast on their way to Sri Lanka.

Anting by Common Swallows: Usually one observes the swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) flying about swiftly in the air or perched on wires. Rarely does one see it descending on to the ground. But surprisingly I have had ample opportunities to see, on a number of instances, this bird on the ground at the open meadow at the Adyar Estuary. At times I have noticed upto about 50-60 birds on the ground and on the low calotropis bushes.

I was a bit surprised when I had seen them on the ground and thought probably they were down in quest of food. But quite lately I had observed them closely and noted that the birds on the ground had ruffled plumage and appeared to be preening their feathers. On closely examining the patches frequented by the birds, I found a number of small beackish brown ants. In all probabilities these birds were anting.

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Bird watching at Veltur Tank by S.Ashok Kumar, Indian Administrative Service, H.No.10-3-283/5, Humayun Nagar, Hyderabad 500028: While motoring along the National Highway No. 7 on 2nd September, I spotted a small tank abutting the road at 122 K.M. stone. Parking my car on the roadside, I walked to the road margin and surveyed the tank. In the midst of the tank bed and at a safe distance from the Highway and the bund are about 30 Acacia Arabica trees. The tank is brimming with water because of freshes due to recent monsoon rains. The Acacia trees, thus insulated from human and animal interference, afford an ideal habitat for nesting and breeding. I found a mixed heronry co-existing with an extensive colony of vociferous Baya birds. The heronry consists of Grey Herons (Ardea cinerea), Little Egrets (Egretta garzetta), Cattle Egrets (Bubulcus ibis), Cormorants (Phalacrocorax niger), Pond Herons

(Ardeola grayii) and Ibis (Threskiornis melanocephala). While the Egrets are roosting in 11 trees the Bayas have chosen two trees for their colony. It was almost dusk and against the backdrop of steel grey sky, I could not identify whether the Ibis are white or black. So I resolved to visit the tank again, armed with the binoculars.

On 19th September I revisited the tank. The cowherd informed me that the tank goes by the name of Komati Kunta of Veltur village. As the Herons, Egrets and Ibis had not yet returned to their roosting place, I went over the tank bund to observe the Baya nests. I focussed my binoculars on the colony of nests suspended from the overhanging branches and found it to be that of the Blackbreasted Weaver bird (Ploceus benghalensis). The male bird with its beautiful coat of breeding plumage - brilliant golden crown, white throat and a black band below - looked exceedingly handsome. It was fascinating to watch the male bird flying from one nest to another and calling on the lady birds and finally making a dash to the unfinished green nest to complete it for another mate. The din of the Bayas was occasionally pierced by the croaking of few egrets incubating in the nests. I followed the thick tree branch with my binoculars and found a snake with brown and white bands lying in wait for its prey. I witnessed two Egrets taking charge of incubating duties and relieving the other birds for foraging.

My digital blinked 5.45 pm., when I sighted flocks of Egrets winging their way from the eastern paddy fields to their roosting place. After circling over the tank twice or thrice, they landed on the tree branches and soon indulged in vocalisation. I counted 29 Little Cormorants, 4 White Ibis and number of Cattle Egrets, Little Egrets, Grey Herons and Pond Herons. That the Little Egrets are breeding is evidenced by the long drooping crest of two narrow plumes. These plumes were strikingly beautiful whenever the bird moved its head. The Cattle Egrets were also in breeding plumes - orange-buff head, neck and back. On the farthest tree I sighted a lone Common Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis), my attention was drawn to the flight of two birds which landed on the lower branch of the nearest tree. Focussing my binoculars, I identified them as Pied Crested Cuckoo (Clamator jacobinus). The white tips of tail feathers and round patches on wings conspicuous during their flight were unmistakable. The din of the ubiquitous Common Mynas (Acridotheres tristis) drowned the crackle of the Egrets. The White Ibis silhouetted against the grey sky provided a magnificent view.

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Notes on fawns attacked by crows and Shorttoed Eagle killing a cobra by Indra Kumar Sharma:

Birds as robbers of fawns: The house and jungle crow are well known robbers of the clutches and broods of many birds. During my three year study on the ecology and biology of the gazelle and the blackbuck in the Gura-Bishmois area (about 20 kms from Jodhpur), there were at least three cases of killing of new born gazelle fawns by the White-backed Vulture (one case), and the Jungle Crow (two cases), new born fawns are helpless for one day and the jungle crow and vulture forcefully struck them on the head and killing them. Sometimes they fled at the approach of a stray dog dangerous carnivore. I might mention here that stray dogs have become a significant nuisance in this area, preying heavily on Jawns as well as adults.

Cobra hunted by the Shorttoed Eagle: On 24th August, 1981 a cobra was moving in a scrub jungle picking beetles. A short-toed eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*) soaring above made air raids on the cobra pecking its tail. The cobra then raised its hood and immediately the eagle attacked and clutched the hood with its powerful claws, and forcefully struck its sharp beak on the hood. The injured cobra tried to escape but it was cut from the middle, and the hind part of the body was consumed by the eagle, the rest of the cobra died within a few hours.

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Comments by Lavkumar Khacher: In the March-April 1982 issue of the Newsletter Mr. Gay has asked for comments on some untypical conduct in birds which he has seen (page 9).

Swallows on the ground: One bright but chilly winter morning I saw a very large concourse of common Swallows circling around an isolated, large *Ficus glomerata*. They were obviously revving up prior to getting onto the task of procuring the day's sustenance. The leafy tree had been their night's toast. Around the base of the tree were hundreds of swallows perched on the small rock fragments strewn around. They were quite obviously soaking in the warmth from the sun and trying to keep out of the wind.

Gowding by Black drongos: Prior to the nesting search, it is not unusual to find two (apparently) male drongos

courting a female. Sometimes there may be as many as five individuals interacting on a tree or even on the ground. It is not uncommon to find fairly large numbers of drongos joining with other birds at communal roosts among densely foliated trees. During the cool season there may be along with the Black Drongos a couple of White bellied and one or two Grey Drongos as well. A silk cotton or a coral tree in flower will of course attract many drongos as indeed will a ploughing operation or the burning of sugarcane refuse.

While I am passing comments, I might add a further record to Redwattled Lapwing nesting on roofs (page 19). My son had written to say he had helped downy lapwing chicks to the ground from the terrace of St. Xaviers College, Ahmedabad. If I remember correctly Malcolm Mac Donald has also found these lapwings nesting on bungalow terraces in New Delhi. This propensity to go in for pent house apartments does not seem to be that very rare.

In Rajkot, peahens lay in balconies and on ledges above windows and seem to be doing quite well. Sunbirds and Redvented Bulbuls siting nests inside houses is not apparently very rare.

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Extract from letter from Lavkumar Khacher of 21.1.1982:

I have here a few more comments on the December Newsletter. Reference P.S. Thakker's 'Birdwatching at Sheelaj' page 17, we would have very many Bharatpurs all over the country if trees were protected standing in the middle of water. That our Storks, Egrets and their kin are still around in good numbers is more because of their long lives. The crash in population will soon be felt since their nesting trees are rapidly dwindling. Action must be started immediately all over the country if this threat to our large water birds is to be averted. What has shocked me was a recommendation by a foreign 'expert' to call - a scientific term for to kill - birds congregating at Bharatpur. Not far from this famous sanctuary are extensive water swamps where additional nesting locations can be developed. The trouble is, the urgency is not felt by conservationists, and even if it were to be felt, the necessary commitment by Government is absent, and of course the paucity of funds.

As far back as in 1973 I had recommended planting of trees on islands in the Nal Sarovar and on a large island in Lake Chandola south of Ahmedabad to attract nesting birds.

Reference V.Santharam's 'Pellet casting by Bee-eaters' I suggest kingfishers also cast pellets and I should not be surprised if Rollers and Shrikes also do so. Their diet of whole fish (Kingfishers) and Chitinous armoured beetles and other insects (Rollers and Shrikes) should make it essential to have this method of removing matter from the fore part of the digestive tract. Professor K.K.Neelakantan's observations suggest this to be so.

Reference stop press from Oryx page 19: I think we have long past the halcyon days when we could burn up petrol to add up a record numbers of species seen on one day - the Goodies covered 300 miles, Country Life Group 600! Perhaps a better system would be to cycle the whole day (excellent exercise) and cover a smaller area more intensively. The petrol saved could be added to the ~~£~~ 3000 raised. Could you pass on this suggestion to the sponsors of the Birdwatch? At Khijadia wetlands a pair of sturdy legs could yield well over a hundred species - North sea oil strike notwithstanding!

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Newsletter for Birdwatchers

VOL. XXII NO. 7 & 8 JULY - AUGUST 1982

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Common



Jerdon's or
Doublebanded Courser



Indian Courser

0 30 60 90 mm

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದ ಮುನ್ನಡೆ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ದತ್ತ

ಹರಿಜನ — ಗಿರಿಜನ ಹಾಗೂ ಇತರ ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗದವರ ಸಮಗ್ರ, ಎಳೆಗೆಗಾಗಿ ಶ್ರಮಿಸುತ್ತಿರುವ ರಾಜ್ಯ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ. ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರವು ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ದಿನಾಚರಣೆಯನ್ನು ಆಚರಿಸುತ್ತಿರುವ ಈ ಶುಭಸಂದರ್ಭದಲ್ಲಿ ದಲಿತ ವರ್ಗದ ನೆಮ್ಮದಿಯ ಬದುಕಿಗೆ ಅನುಕೂಲವಾಗುವ ಅನೇಕ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಾರ್ಯಗತಗೊಳಿಸಿದ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ರಾಜ್ಯ ಹೆಮ್ಮೆ ಪಡುತ್ತದೆ.

ಶ್ರೀ ಆರ್. ಗುಂಡೂರಾವ್ ಅವರ ದಕ್ಷ ನಾಯಕತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ 20 ಅಂಶಗಳ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವನ್ನು ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಸಿಸ್ಟಮಿಕ್ ಕಾರ್ಯಗತಗೊಳಿಸಿ, ದುರ್ಬಲ ವರ್ಗದ ಜನರೂ ಕೂಡ, ಸಮಾಜದ ಇತರ ಜನರೊಂದಿಗೆ ಕೂಡಿ ಬಾಳುವ ಅವಕಾಶಗಳನ್ನು ಒದಗಿಸಿಕೊಟ್ಟಿದೆ.

ಕಡತ ವಿಲೇವಾರಿ ಅರದೋಲನ ಕೈಗೊಂಡು ಅಡಳಿತ ರಂಗವನ್ನು ಚುರುಕುಗೊಳಿಸಿದ್ದಲ್ಲದೇ ಜನತೆಯ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳನ್ನು ಅರಿಯಲು ಅಡಳಿತವನ್ನೇ ಜನರ ಬಾಗಿಲಿಗೆ ಕೊಂಡೊಯ್ದ ಶ್ರೇಯಸ್ಸು ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದ್ದು.

ದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ಪ್ರಪ್ರಥಮವಾಗಿ ರೈತನ ಹಿತವನ್ನು ಗಮನದಲ್ಲಿಟ್ಟುಕೊಂಡು ಕೋಟ್ಯಾಧಿ ರೂ.ಗಳ ರಿಯಾಯಿತಿಯನ್ನು ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಹತ್ತು ಎಕರೆವರೆಗಿನ ಖುಷ್ಕಿ ಜಮೀನಿಗೆ ಭೂ ಕಂದಾಯ ರದ್ದು, ಸಣ್ಣ ರೈತರ ತಕಾವಿ ಸಾಲ ರದ್ದು, ಬೆಳೆ ವಿಮಾಯೋಜನೆ, ನೀರಾವರಿ ಪಂಪ್‌ಸೆಟ್ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ದರಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಇಳಿತ, ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ತೆರಿಗೆ ರದ್ದು ಹಾಗೂ ನೀರುಕರದ ಪರಿಷ್ಕರಣೆ, ಸಹಕಾರಿ ಸಾಲಕ್ಕೆ ಸುಸ್ತಿ ಬಡ್ಡಿ ಮನ್ನಾ ಮುಂತಾದ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಒದಗಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಕೃಷಿ ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರು, ಹೆಂಡ ಇಳಿಸುವವರು, ಮರ ಕಡಿಯುವವರು, ಗೋಡೆ ಕಟ್ಟುವವರು ಮುಂತಾದ ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರು ವೃತ್ತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ನಿರತರಾಗಿದ್ದಾಗ, ಆಕಸ್ಮಿಕಕ್ಕೊಳಗಾಗಿ ಮೃತರಾದರೆ ಅವರಿಗೆ 2000 ರೂ.ಗಳ ಪರಿಹಾರ ನೀಡುವ ಯೋಜನೆ 'ಆತಾಕಿರಣ' ಜಾರಿಗೊಳಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಪ್ರತಿ ಹಳ್ಳಿಗೂ ಕುಡಿಯುವ ನೀರು ಹಾಗೂ ಶಾಲೆ ಒದಗಿಸಲು ಕ್ರಮ ಕೈಗೊಳ್ಳಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಮಂಗಳೂರು ಹಾಗೂ ಗುಲ್ಬರ್ಗಾ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾನಿಲಯಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಮುಂದಿನ ವರ್ಷ ಪ್ರಾರಂಭವಾಗುವ ಮಲೆನಾಡು ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾನಿಲಯಗಳು ಉನ್ನತ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣಕ್ಕೆ ಸಹಾಯಕವಾಗಿವೆ.

ಇಲ್ಲಿಯವರೆಗೆ 2.75 ಲಕ್ಷ ಮನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಬಡವರಿಗಾಗಿ ಕಟ್ಟಿಕೊಡಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಈ ವರ್ಷ ಇನ್ನೂ 1 ಲಕ್ಷ ಮನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಟ್ಟಲಾಗುವುದು.

ಭೂ ಸುಧಾರಣೆ ಕಾಯ್ದೆಯನ್ನು ಕಟ್ಟುನಿಟ್ಟಾಗಿ ಜಾರಿಗೊಳಿಸುವುದರಿಂದಾಗಿ ಸುಮಾರು 5 ಲಕ್ಷ ಗೇಡೆದಾರರು 21 ಲಕ್ಷ ಎಕರೆ ಭೂಮಿಯ ಒಡೆತನ ಪಡೆದಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಹೆಚ್ಚುವರಿ ಭೂಮಿಯನ್ನು ಗುರುತಿಸಿ ಭೂ ರಹಿತರಿಗೆ ಹಂಚುವ ಕಾರ್ಯ ಭರದಿಂದ ಸಾಗಿದೆ.

ಹರಿಜನ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಗಾಗಿ ವಿಶೇಷ ಘಟಕ ಯೋಜನೆಯನ್ನು ಜಾರಿಗೊಳಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದ್ದು, 6ನೆಯ ಯೋಜನೆಯ ಅಂತ್ಯದ ಬೇಳಿಗೆ 5.30 ಲಕ್ಷ ಹರಿಜನ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳನ್ನು ಬಡತನ ರೇಖೆಯಿಂದ ಮೇಲೆತ್ತಲ್ಪಡಲಾಗುವುದು. ಸಮಗ್ರ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆಯ ಮುಖಾಂತರ ಅನೇಕ ಬಡವರಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯ ನೀಡಲು 14 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.ಗಳನ್ನು ಒದಗಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಕನ್ನಡವನ್ನು ಕಡ್ಡಾಯಗೊಳಿಸುವುದರ ಮೂಲಕ ವಿಶ್ವಕನ್ನಡ ಸಮ್ಮೇಳನಕ್ಕೆ ಭದ್ರ ಬುನಾದಿಯನ್ನು ಹಾಕಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಜಾನಪದ ಅಕಾಡೆಮಿಯ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆ, ಹಂಪೆಯ ಪುನರುಜ್ಜೀವನ ಛಂದಾವನ ಉದ್ಘಾಟನದ ನವೀಕರಣ ಸಾಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಕ ರಂಗದಲ್ಲಿಯೆ ನಮ್ಮ ಸಾಧನೆಗಳು.

ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ: ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ, ನಾರ್ತಾ ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಚಾರ ಇಲಾಖೆ

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FOR BIRDPATCHERS

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(Dr.K.G.Raghu, District Hospital, Mannantoddy, Wynad District, Kerala 670 645, has offered to arrange field trips to North Wynad District. Please contact him for details. The Newsletter is most grateful for this offer).
- Indian Bustards brought back from the Brink?(Courtesy: ICBP Newsletter, Vol.4 No.3, June 1982).
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Editorial

ICBP Annual Report: The International Council for Birds Preservation has commenced issuing an Annual Bulletin relating to their activities and Bulletin No.14 containing the Annual Report for 1980-81 makes very interesting reading. Dillon Ripley who has been President for almost 25 years will now be retiring. He has a most impressive record of achievements and as many of our readers will know has been a great friend of the Bombay Natural History Society and other institutions concerned with Ornithology and Conservation in this country. Some of our readers may like to support ICBP by becoming members of the Organisation. The address is ICBP, 219c, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, Great Britain.

There are 34 conservation projects listed for the period 1980-81. Two of these are of particular interest to us. These are Project No.26, relating to the Bengal Florican (*Eupodotis bengalensis*) and Project 26A Lesser Florican (*Sypheotides indica*). In the Newsletter of the ICBP there is a note with the heading: Indian Bustards Brought Back from the Brink. This is reproduced elsewhere in our Newsletter. The ICBP has started a Dillon Ripley Fund with an initial grant of 50,000\$ from the Mellon Foundation. The Fund will be used for bird conservation projects and particularly for emergency projects where speedy approval is necessary, and in situations where other sources of funds could not be secured.

Five Star Hotel opposite Calcutta Zoo: The proposal to build a Five Star Hotel on Belvedere road opposite the Zoo in Calcutta has been strongly objected to by several Ornithologists on the ground that the building will interfere with the traditional fly pass of the whistling teals. In a report published in the Statesman, Calcutta on 25.7.82 it is stated that Dr.B.Biswas, former Joint Director of the Zoological Survey of India does not agree that the hotel will adversely affect the bird life. Apparently Dr.Biswas, said that out of the 123 species of migratory birds which come to Calcutta only 46 are aquatic and the others are terrestrial. Dr.Biswas hopes that even the migratory hordes will learn to avoid the building and find an alternative route. There is a serious danger, however, that the birds might be attracted to the lights of the hotel and will dash against the windows to their death. As far as this hazard is concerned the second Hooghly Bridge with its brilliant illumination may pose a more serious problem.

The report is somewhat misleading for it says that though Dr. Biswas led the Environmentalists campaign, he stated in an interview that the hotel would pose no threat at all to the migratory flight path. Perhaps Dr. Biswas would be good enough to send us a statement.

Checklist of the birds of Aligarh and Gir: Abdul Jamil Urfi has sent in a checklist of the birds of Aligarh and adjoining areas. This consists of a 177 species and a portion of this will be reproduced in later issues. If any reader is interested I will be glad to send a xerox copy. The cost of xeroxing will be approximately Rs.10/-.

There is also a list of the Gir Forest submitted by Kishore Gohil and Pradeep Pandya. This can also be sent to members on request for a cost of Rs.5/-. I was surprised to see from this list that there are several water birds in the Gir including the Darter, the Little Cormorant, the Little Green Bittern, Whimbrel, Avocet and other waders.

Production of the Newsletter: I see from the Pass Books that the total amount left in the Newsletter Account is Rs.921/-. This is not enough to carry us through the year and I wonder whether any of our Readers with contacts with business houses can send us an Advertisement or two. The total number of subscribers for the current year is 180 and the cost of production and despatch of these Newsletters is Rs.450/-. If further funds do not come in we may have to have a combined issue for September-October. I hope that this situation will not arise. I am of course making attempts to get the usual advertisements from the Karnataka Government which has been of great help in the past.

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Indian Bustards brought back from the Brink (Courtsey: ICBP Newsletter): Bustards comprise an ancient family, increasingly at risk as their lowland plains or highland plateaux habitats come under the plough. Recognising this threat, the ICBP formed the Bustard Working Group in 1971 to co-ordinate the conservation of these intriguing birds. It has become more than obvious during the last ten years that while those species occurring in southern Africa and Australia are still relatively secure, the populations of their relatives in Eurasia, and particularly India, are approaching ominously low levels. Since 1980, therefore, when the Indian priorities firmly presented themselves at

the International Symposium on Bustards held at Jaipur, the Bustard Group has been vigorously encouraging a programme for immediate action to save the Great Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps*, the Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica*, and the Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis*, all three endemic to the Indian sub-continent.

For at least a century, *Ardeotis* has dominated the bustard literature of India, and is presently the only bustard listed in the Bird Red Data Book. Much is known of its former range and status, how and why it declined, and, indeed, there are even recent (1972) estimates of its population by K.S. Dharmakumarsinhji, who has placed it at not higher than 750 birds. This alarming figure prompted the Bombay Natural History Society to devote part of its Endangered Species Project (run in conjunction with the US Fish and Wildlife Service) towards research on and conservation of the remaining sites where the birds still occur. The field investigator, Dr.A.S. Rahmani and the ICBP Bustard Group consult closely and regularly on the aims and implementation of the project, and the prospects for success appear bright.

The limelight attracted by *Ardeotis* has more than overshadowed the terrible situation into which the two floricans have fallen. Investigations by the Bustard Group have uncovered evidence that the literature as recent as the last decade is hopelessly out of date, often relying on sources from before World War II, if not earlier. Substantial updating and assessment appeared to be vital, and both species have become candidates for the next edition of the Red Data Book. Proposals were prepared immediately for preliminary field work on the distribution and status of *Sypheotides* and *Houbaropsis*.

The first survey, on *Sypheotides*, was carried out in the summer of 1981 by Paul Goriup and Zbigniew Karpowicz, with considerable support from US Fish and Wildlife Service, Wg Cmd S.D. Jadeja (Jamsaheb of Jamnagar), and the Forests and Wildlife Department of the Indian Government. Predictably, the results indicated a bleak future for the Lesser Florican. A migrant, wintering in central India and moving to the grasslands of north-west India turned lush by the monsoon, this bird was once seen, and shot, in hundreds. Last year, concentrated efforts for over a month in one of its former breeding strongholds, Jamnagar District in Gujarat, produced a tally of only eight males, and no sightings of females, or nest findings.

One has only to turn to the agricultural statistics to find the cause for this poor showing. Between 1909 and 1981, the amount of land used for food production (mainly cereals and pulses) dwindled steadily from 34 percent to 18 percent, with no loss of tonnage, thanks to great improvements in husbandry techniques. Nevertheless, the total area of ground under cultivation increased dramatically during the same period, but especially since 1950, from 42 percent to 75 percent, on account of the incentive to grow cash crops (groundnuts, castor, sugar and cotton). The residual 25 percent of Jamnagar District comprises hill ranges, salt flats, forest plantations and 'vidis'. These latter are government controlled native grasslands reserved solely for hay production, the hay being stored and sold to villagers for their abundant cattle during the lean winter months. Vidis represent the last vestiges of the once immense, undulating grassy plains found throughout Jamnagar as recently as the 1950's, and are so far the only places where Sypheotides has been found. Furthermore, although Jamnagar District occupies 9015 sq.km., only a mere 155 sq.km. of this is under Forest Department management, which includes the 62 vidi sites, which together total a paltry 60 sq.km. It is not unjustified to assume that a similar picture applies throughout Sypheotides's range (evidence for this was also collected during the survey), thus revealing the seriousness of the problem. The Bustard Group has consequently drafted an eight-year project programme for formulating a comprehensive conservation plan to ensure the future survival of what little Sypheotides population and habitat is left. The outlook for Houbaropsis is perhaps even grimmer. Bustard problems are still novel in the bird conservation world, and

attracting funds is commensurately more difficult. Thus, until late February 1982, it was in the balance whether a search of its remaining distribution in Nepal and India could be attempted at all, let alone promoting action to save the species from annihilation from its last localities. Unlike Sypheotides, Houbaropsis is rather sedentary, and so more susceptible to the ravages of habitat destruction. Fortunately, a grant from the New York Zoological Society has meant that an adequate, if reduced, expedition can be mounted in Nepal this spring by Tim and Carol Inskipp.

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Bird-watching with Salim Ali at Deoban - Chakrata by
Hamida Saiduzzafar: The Forest Rest House at Deoban sits
 above Chakrata and the Doon Valley, at 9,232 feet above

sea-level, as the notice-board tells us. About 3 km above it is the Deoban Peak or Vyas Shikhar at 9.400 ft. In the old days one had to climb up on foot or on ponies from Chakrata, a semi-military hill-station at about 6.300 feet. Now there is a forest motor-road (more suitable for jeeps than small cars) right up to the Rest House.

My visit to Deoban this summer started with a letter from Salim Ali that he was intending to visit Deoban between June 16th and 20th, and, provided accommodation was available, would I like to come along? Who could resist such an offer? So, after confirming all arrangements from the Forest Department, a party of 4 of us, Salim Ali, his niece, her husband, and myself, set out on 16.6. from Rajpur, Dehra Dun, in a Forest Department jeep-with-trailer. We were escorted by a Forest Officer, who went with us all the way up to Deoban, and returned to Chakrata the same evening, after making sure that we were all properly accommodated in the Forest Rest House.

The evening air at that height was cold and crisp, and the charming Forest Rest House overlooked a rolling meadow lined with forests of high-altitude oak¹ as well as the conifers consisting of Spruce², Silver Fir³ and Deodar⁴. Our bird-watching started the same evening with an argument over a bird-call, as to whether it was the 'Brain-fever bird' (common hawk-cuckoo: Cuculus varius) or some other bird. Its call closely resembled the 'Brain-fever' of the plains bird and yet it was different: it said 'Brain-fee-wee' or 'Brain-fee-w..', so that the third syllable when present was muffled, like a person with a slurring of speech; also it didn't go on ecstatically raising its pitch (scream) with each successive cry. Salim Ali finally settled the matter by telling us that it was the same bird, but a sub-species found at high altitudes...in fact, I suppose this was the Large hawk-cuckoo (Cuculus sparveriioides) we saw it once or twice, and its flight was definitely like that of a shikra, but as it usually kept hidden in foliage, details were not seen.

¹ 'Kharsu' oak: Qercus semicarpifolia. 'Morhu' oak: Qercus dilatata. These high-altitude oaks differ from 'Banjh' oak: Qercus incana because they grow tall like the conifers, and most of their branchings are on top.

² Spruce: Picea smytheana, was the commonest of the conifers in this area.

³ Silver Fir: Abies pindro, was next and

⁴ Deodar: Cedrus deodara was seen least.

At the crack of the next dawn we woke up to the enchanting song of the (Himalayan) Whistling Thrush (Myiophonus caeruleus), and later on we saw the bird several times behind the Rest House. Later, our Chowkidar, Shiv Lal, told me that the 'big crow-like black bird' which sings in the mornings, had a nest inside one of the abandoned store-rooms near the kitchen. He said he had seen the birds fly in and out through a window (whose glass-panes were missing), and he thought there were chicks in there because he had heard them. With my commando torch beam I located the nest, neatly tucked in between the wall and the rafters on the N.E. wall of the store-room about 12 feet from the ground; I showed it to Salim Ali who confirmed that it was a typical site for a Whistling-thrush nest, but the nest was silent, so I think the chicks had departed a day or so earlier as there were plenty of fresh 'droppings' on the floor.

The same morning, two of us saw a small bird, mostly black but with white around the cheeks, which we identified as a Coal-tit (Parus after aemodius); it was going in and out of a hole in an oak-tree, near the Rest House, and we were quite excited, thinking it had a nest there; but it turned out to be a 'Red Herring' because there was nothing there, and the bird was probably either reconnoitring or bluffing us! Anyway, two days later we were compensated for that by discovering a real Coal-tit nest in a deep slit of a 'Kharsu' oak-tree about 50 yards down below the kitchen side of the bungalow. There were obviously chicks in it, because both parents were flitting nervously around, and hid temporarily whenever we directed our binoculars to the nest-site, then darted furtively in with some tasty morsel when they thought we weren't looking. Salim Ali also saw this scene, and confirmed that this was a typical location for the nest of the Coal-tits, which were in great abundance in Deoban.

In the course of our numerous walks, which never usually exceeded about 4 or 5 km from the Rest House in any direction, we were struck by the fact that though (in the mornings especially) the forest was a-ring with sharp musical notes and bird-sounds, yet neither with naked eye nor with binoculars, could we locate (at any one time) more than one or two elusive little birds, flitting and darting, turning and twisting too fast for the eye to follow them properly---- as if they were playing hide-and-seek or catch-me-if-you-can!

This was when we were on the narrow lower paths. However, when we climbed up towards the peak, vyas Shikhar,

we came level with many of the tree-tops, and from here we saw large parties of Coal-tits, and Warblers along with other birds 'as a mixed roving band ... of small insectivorous birds' so aptly described in Indian Hill Birds. We then realized that since most of the foliage of these tall slender oak and conifer trees was at the top, hence it was much more difficult to see the birds while standing on narrow slippery lower paths, holding our binoculars almost vertically upwards --- inviting vertigo!

Apart from these tantalizing small birds, we saw several parties (on different occasions) of the Himalayan Nutcracker (Nucifraga carvocatactes) foraging about in the moss and lichen of the 'Kharsu' oaks. Salim Ali told us how they got the name 'nutcracker' from the way they insert their beak into the side of a pine-cone from below, open the beak to release the cone-seed which falls straight into its mouth. We didn't see this 'drama' because the pine-cones were very unripe at this season. These strange-looking birds, which I was seeing for the first time, were not shy and took little notice of our spying tactics. One day, I was taken in by what seemed to be the cry of a young lamb ... but to my amazement, it soon 'flew' up into the forest (I hadn't been able to see anything). When I told Salim Ali about this mystery, he confirmed that it was one of the calls of the Nutcracker, and is described in Indian Hill Birds as 'a nasal bleat, as that of a young kid'. It was really wonderful to have Salim Ali at hand to tell us all the details we wanted, and help identify these high-altitude birds, most of whom were unfamiliar to us. However, he insisted that we must also keep looking up everything in the three reference books we had carried up with us: Book of Indian Birds; Indian Hill Birds; and Birds of the Eastern Himalayas. He himself also liked to refer back to the books, especially when he wanted to compare what we now saw with his earlier records, because he was visiting this place after more than 40 years.

Among the most beautiful and fascinating birds we saw at Deoban was a couple (?pair) of Red-billed Blue Magpies (Urocissa erythroryncha). They used to fly around among the oaks and conifers just about 20 to 30 feet below the Rest House, and we thought they had a nest down there amongst the foliage, but we could not locate one. Although we had seen these birds frequently at Rajpur (Dehra Dun), yet over here we had the finest close-up view of these magnificent birds that one could wish for.

The bird that puzzled all of us most was an 'eagle', which was often seen in the mornings and evenings, soaring and wheeling above the forest-covered hill-tops in the middle-distance from us. It never came close enough for proper identification and we never saw it sitting anywhere; I looked through all our books and came up with the idea that it might be a Himalayan Griffon Vulture, but Salim Ali disagreed vehemently saying that no vulture was ever so magnificent as the bird we were looking at. I am still wondering what it could have been!

Among the other birds, seen only once or twice by one or other of us were:- 1) Brown-crested tit (Parus dichrous kangrae). The interesting thing about this bird was that Salim Ali now saw it at almost exactly the same situation where he had seen it last time he was in Deoban; he had then also taken a photo of it, which is shown as the lower picture on Plate 69 of Indian Hill Birds.

2) Himalayan tree-creeper (Certhia himalayana)

3) Olivaceous tree-warbler (Phylloscopus affinis). This little bird was seen by me at a height of about 9,300 feet, flitting about some bushes and lower branches; Salim Ali, who was a little ahead and had missed seeing it, identified it from my (instant) description.

4) Missel (or Mistle) Thrush (Turdus viscivorus bonapartei). This Missel Thrush was sitting silently watching us from amongst the foliage of an oak-tree. It was identified by Salim Ali and seen by all of us because it just sat posing for us for a long time.

5) Green-backed tit (Parus monticolus)

6) Himalayan pied woodpecker (Dryobates himalayensis)

7) Verditer flycatcher (Eumyia thalassima). This beautiful bird was seen on several occasions as it could be easily identified by its shape, colour and restless movements.

8) Himalayan greenfinch (Hypacanthus spinoides)

9) Grey tit (parus major)

10) Raven. This account would be incomplete without a mention of these huge ravens, which like others of their kith and kin were mostly around human habitation and enjoyed the scraps from our picnics.

Thus all-in-all there was no dearth of bird-life in Deoban, although the variety of birds which we were able to see and hear seemed to be less than we expected. I believe that if we had spent a few more days in that lovely forested place, it would have revealed a great deal more.

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Nesting of Shrikes by Mr. Sherman C/o. Dr. K.K. Sharma,
Talwandi Sabo 151302, Bhatinda District, Punjab:

Bay-backed shrike: It is always interesting to watch birds in the breeding season. In the case of the Bay-backed shrike the female alone attends to parental duties before the eggs are hatched. She takes the initiative in finding out a suitable nesting site and she flies from tree to tree and sits on that portion of the tree which appears convenient from the point of view of nest building. Curiously, the test includes flapping of wings and it occasionally behaves as if it were a nestling asking for food. In the process she also calls like the nestlings do: chir-chir-chir. Sitting on a likely nesting site the bird takes into account all the future duties which it will have to perform. For example, the bird practices how it will feed the nestlings and considers whether it will be possible to sit easily while incubating the eggs. Is there room for a mate to sit near her? A suitable branch next to the nesting site would be an added advantage. During this period, the male does not seem to be at all interested, and the nest is completed by the female, though the male is seen around the nesting site. The female completes the nest within two to three days. As soon as the female commences incubation, the male bird starts to feed its mate. The female always remains in the nest and simulates the begging behaviour of the nestlings when the male brings it food.

Rufous backed shrike: As far as the selection of the site and making of the nest is concerned the Rufous-backed behaves like the Bay-backed. The interesting difference is that the female does not allow her mate to approach her young ones. The female sits near the nest all day and the mate who brings food both for herself and for the nestlings is always kept at arms length from the young ones. If it happens that the male lands too near the nest and attempts to feed the young, the female at once picks the food from the beak of the male and feeds the nestlings herself. It is only after the young ones have left the nest that the male feeds them directly.

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Notes by Mr. Y.M. Rai Grami, Lecturer, D.M. Inter College, Meerut:

Crepescular feeding of Kingfisher: It all started from winter. In a vacant plot here there was a mound of accumulated cowdung with drying cakes scattered around. Every evening at dusk when the light began to wane a White-breasted Kingfisher arrived and took its stance on the dung mound. As the light began to fade beetles scrambled out from under the drying cakes. The Kingfisher would catch one, fly to a tree nearby, strike the beetle's elytra off on a branch, swallow it and return to its waiting place. In the poor light it was the crunching sound of the beetle's elytra being struck and its silhouette against the sky that enables me to ascertain the nature of the Kingfisher's food. When it started getting dark (and it usually coincided with the arrival of the spotted Owl) the Kingfisher would fly away with a final yell of triumph to its roosting grounds. Every evening it made a meal of six to ten beetles during its stay of about 15 to 20 minutes. The Kingfisher still resorts to this feeding though the dung does not accumulate there in a mound. The Kingfisher now sits on electric wires for its crepuscular feeding but is not so regular as before.

Breeding notes - Baya weaver bird: Every year the Baya weaver bird arrived here on a certain palm tree in the first week of April for breeding. In 1978 someone cut the green fronds in March for commercial purposes leaving only the dry ones hanging about. The bayas arrived as usual in April, sat and sang on adjacent Bauhinia tree and gradually disappeared in three weeks. The next year in 1979, they did not arrive at all, but again appeared at their usual time in 1980 and 1981 and bred successfully. This year the cold spell of winter extended upto April on account of intermittent rains in the plains and snowfall in the hills. Probably due to this the Bayas arrived on 15th May. The unusual prolonging of the cold spell might have disturbed their breeding biology and extended the nesting activities till May.

Black throated Bayas: In a small patch of typha near the tubewell of an agricultural farm the Black throated Bayas started building a colony in May. One morning some grass-cutters cutting typha from the edge were refrained from doing so. But the birds seemed to have been disturbed and abandoned their nest building. On two sides of the typha patch were two vast fields of vegetables. The spraying of pesticides in it at the coming up crop coincided with the abandoning of the Bayas nesting and this might have weighed heavily in the Baya's discarding the nesting site.

Redwattled Lapwing: There have been notes in the Newsletter about Red wattled Lapwing breeding on roof tops. I have been observing this habit of the lapwing for several years. It has happened in cities where spacious lawns or play-grounds have existed near private or public buildings. A pair of lapwings living in a one acre private garden here builds its nest every year on the roof of a house at fifty yards outside the campus while the owner has a house in the midst of the estate. The place is only disturbed by a few working gardeners. On the other hand in a college campus where students are mostly moving about, a pair of lapwings breeds on the ground. Apparently the two situations are contradictory. But the basic factor of security governing their breeding is the same. The gardeners moving about in the first instance do not leave any part of the garden untouched. But the students' activity in the second instance becomes limited due to examinations in March, which is the time of Red wattled Lapwings nesting here, when the lawns and play-grounds are left undisturbed.

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Mail Order Crane Bride by Acharya Dwarkanath (Courtesy: Science News): A graceful courtship danced between a male whooping crane at an Idaho refuge and a female newly arrived from the East has encouraged scientists to predict a large increase in the whooping crane population over the next few years. The first whooping cranes hatched and raised by sandhill crane foster parents at Gray's Lake National Wildlife Refuge are now six years old and ready for breeding but unfortunately they are all males. The female just imported was reared at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Md. The cranes at the center come from 'extra' eggs at whooping crane summer nesting grounds. Females generally lay two eggs, but only one chick survives, so scientists take one egg of a pair to incubate and rear in captivity. Scott Derrickson of the center says that the female recently sent to Idaho didn't need special wilderness training because her mate will take care of her. He says she has made a good transition - she's roosting, foraging and avoiding barbed wire. Derrickson hopes the cranes will migrate together in the fall and breed next year.

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Correspondence

Need for a Directory of Birdwatchers by Aasheesh Pittie,
14-7-370 Begum Bazar, Hyderabad 500012: I propose the
 compilation of a Directory of Birdwatchers throughout
 India. It is like this; whenever a birdwatcher goes from
 his city of residence to any other city in India, he/she
 does like to go out in the new surroundings and get to
 know the avi-fauna around him/her. Now if this ventur-
 some person were to know someone, or even the address and
 telephone number of another birdwatcher in the new city,
 would not her or his task become that much easier? The
 aim of the directory mentioned above would be just that.

I do not think that this is an impossible idea, but
 I would request you to discuss it if possible, with people
 who are more knowledgeable in this field. And I want to
 add here that I am willing to do all the work necessary to
 compile and even put the whole thing in print.

If the suggestion seems feasible to you, then let me
 know and we would make a small form to be sent out with
 Conservation magazines and journals in this country. May
 be you could insert a note in the Newsletter also. A
 letter, either cyclostyled or typewritten, could be sent to
 different people all over India, requesting them for a list
 of addresses and telephone numbers of the birdwatchers in
 their locality, the whole being sent either to me, or
 anyone else for final compilation. I suggest that the
 Directory be arranged in an alphabetical order, with the
 names of places forming headings, and underneath another
 alphabetical list of birdwatchers in the area. I think
 that the whole Directory should be divided into the states
 of India, and under each state will come the names of
 cities in the same. It would be best to have a list of
 the birdwatchers of cities, rather than states. The whole
 works, upon compilation, could either be cyclostyled or
 printed, and a price put per copy, to cover the printing
 and paper cost.

This Directory, when completed, will make the task of
 gathering a number of bird enthusiasts to participate in
 projects concerning birds, on a nationwide scale easier.
 This is a fact which I think will follow very soon, what
 with the tremendous increase of interest in Birds in our
 country recently. It would also help ease the task of
 making a nationwide census of birds as suggested by you
 in the Newsletter of January, this year. Please think
 over the idea, and let me know whether it is advisable and
 feasible to bring out such a Directory.

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Indian Plaintive Cuckoo by Dr.K.G.Raghu: District
Hospital, Mannantoddy, Wymad District, Kerala 670 645:

Dr.K.G.Raghu reports on the sighting of an Indian Plaintive Cuckoo (*Cacomantis merulines*) on the 8th of July in Wymad. Apparently, the Bird is not supposed to be found in the locality at this time of the year and this is therefore an unusual occurrence.

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Newsletter for Birdwatchers

VOL. XXII NO. 9 & 10 SEPT. - OCT. 1982



Rare

PLEASE REPORT TO NEAREST
FOREST OFFICER IF YOU SEE
THIS BIRD



Common

Jerdon's or
Doublebanded Courser

0 30 60 90 mm

Indian Courser



PRIME MINISTER,
INDIA.

MESSAGE

The conservation of wildlife has acquired urgency for it is relevant for human survival. Such are the linkages between various species in Nature that the elimination of any one species creates problems in others sooner or later. Humankind has already destroyed many species. Let us not do more harm.

India has always seen life as one. We should set an example in conserving wildlife. My good wishes to Wildlife Week. I should like our children especially to know more about indigenous flora and fauna so that they can feel the oneness and wholeness of life and contribute to a better future for all living creatures.

(Sd.) Indira Gandhi

New Delhi
July 16, 1982

NEWSLETTER
FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. XXII

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September-October 1982

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Editorial:

Over zealous Bird Watching: Sometime back I received a most interesting publication entitled Birds Etc. which is the periodical of the Florida Wildlife Sanctuary and Hospital. Its Editorial, which I reproduce elsewhere, is worth reading, as it indicates how easy it is to transform a pleasant hobby like Bird Watching into a national menace. We in India must be on guard because it is quite likely that within a decade there will be an excessive rush of humanity near fragile areas like for example, the Bharatpur National Park. It might be noted that the Steering Committee of Project Tiger now concerned with the management of 14 Tiger Reserves in the country has taken a strong stand against unchecked tourism. - foreign exchange earner though it may be. In the National Parks of Ceylon the Authorities ensure that only a limited number of tourists are within the Park area at any one time, and similar steps may have to be taken in our sanctuaries also. Certainly the noisy crowds of college students which are frequently seen in places like Bandipur and Betla need to be severely disciplined.

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Bustard Study: The Bombay Natural History Society with financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has undertaken some extremely valuable projects relating to the conservation of our birds. One project on the Ecology of certain Endangered Species of Wildlife and their Habitats, deals with the Great Indian Bustard (*Choriotes nigricaps*). The Principal Investigator is Salim Ali and the Staff consists of Asad Rafi Rahmani, Jugal Kishore Gajja and Ranjit Manakadan. Within the period of a few months since the Project was started much significant information has been collected. The study is being carried out in a small village to the North of Sholapur where the Forest Department has developed pasture and woodlot blocks. Here are a few samples of the type of information that has been collected

.....'On 24 and 25 Oct. Female-6 was seen in the southern side of Sambhar Plot. After that she was regularly seen in this plot. On 29th Oct, a female was located 6-7m from the observer. Due to the sudden appearance of the observer she froze with the neck stretched out on the ground. When the observer sat down in the long grass, she got up and flew a short distance. When the observer left the area, she at once came back within five minutes. In one place she sat down for half

an hour and then went for feeding. A chick was found at that place, sitting in the shade of tall grass. It was motionless except for eyeing the intruder. The head of the chick was comparatively large and a whitish spot was present at the tip of the bill, perhaps traces of the eggtooth. Feathers on the body were sprouting uniformly and traces of a black crown was seen. Like the adult birds, bill was pointing up.

Egg D : Out of the five bustards in Nanaj, three were frequently seen in the Nanaj Woodlot Plot. On 9th Oct. a female sat down at 0844 hours near a few Cassia auriculata bushes. On 12 Oct. a bird was seen in the same place at 0835 hours. At 0906 hours she probably settled down. Next day (13 Oct.) the same bird was seen in the same place and a thorough search revealed an egg between three stone heaps. As this egg was the fourth we have found, it was named as egg-D and the female became Female-D.

Bustard-Blackbuck relationship: Though blackbucks are common in Nanaj, bustards were never found to have any association with these antelopes. Many a time bustards were seen moving between the herd of blackbucks but the two species want their own way.

When a female bustard is with a chick, she is extra cautious of any disturbance. Female-B was seen threatening a doe when it came near her. Similarly another bustard chased a fawn when it tried to follow her. The bustards seem to tolerate a certain distance, after when they threaten the intruder. Threat is done by opening the tail in a fan-shape and raising the wings laterally so the bird looks bigger than its normal size.

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Proposed Bird Sanctuary in Mithapur: Lavkumar Khacher, Conservation Consultant, of WWF India has produced a preliminary report regarding a proposed bird sanctuary in Okhamandal, Saurashtra. It is hoped that Tata Chemicals Ltd., will ultimately sponsor this Project.

The Report emphasises quite rightly that creating a suitable habitat for birds automatically results in improving the Environment for human beings as well and this of course is an important reason why a Company like Tata Chemicals would undertake such a Project. To improve

the general environment a number of steps will have to be taken such as charging the sub-soil water with fresh water to reduce salinity, raising fuel lots, creating tree farms, improving the breed of goats to obtain higher milk yields, setting up game ranches and other similar activities meant to ensure that we can obtain the maximum material benefit from the natural environment on a long term basis. Lavkumar writes: '1. When one examines a map of the Arabian Sea littoral, the importance of the Gulf of Kutch immediately strikes one. The configuration of mountains, high plateau, and the position of the Indian peninsula and Africa -two important wintering areas of birds from temperate Eurasia place the Saurashtra and Kutch areas on a crossroads of considerable avian movement.

'It has been known to ornithologists that a very extensive autumnal migration takes place down the fertile Indus plain both of land and water birds. This concourse splits over the Kutch area to either fly South into India to the South East, or West along the Mekran coast, and then down the Arabian coast to East Africa. A similar flyway is provided by the fertile plain of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (Mesopotamia) and the Persian Gulf with birds from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean flying east along the Mekran Coast to enter our area. Okhamandal, at the tip of the Saurashtra peninsula and the head of the Gulf of Kutch, is a take off point for the Westward flow and landfall for the eastward flow of migrants. The Western Africa-ward flow having Central Asian species, while the Eastern, India-ward one, European species of landbirds. From both sides we receive temperate and circumpolar shorebirds.

The Gulf of Kutch has a very high tidal range producing extensive tidal mud flats which provide an ideal foraging for the throngs of wintering shorebirds, gulls and terns. The extensive area of mangrove jungle enriches the habitat and there are thriving nesting colonies of herons, egrets and storks which are resident in the Indian subcontinent. The tidal mud provides rich feeding also for the Flamingo Phoenicopterus ruber and the Lesser Flamingo Phoeniconaias minor, both species breed colonially on the Great Rann of Kutch. In addition, huge concourses of the latter species arrive in winter from their breeding locations on the East African lakes.

The Okha Rann, a small replica of the Great Rann of Kutch and the Little Rann of Kutch is an expanse of highly saline mud, partially inundated by the high

equinoxal tides and during the monsoon rain by run-off of water from the surrounding land. The Nal Sarovar, another important bird area, and a Sanctuary, is a similar habitat though with no ingress of sea water. All these along with the Gulf of Kutch and the Gulf of Khambath (Cambay) form a wetlands complex of world importance. Congregations of birdlife to be seen in any of these locations make memorable bird sights comparable to any in the world.

The salt industry as operating in the Saurashtra-Kutch area, with its extensive pans where sea water is impounded and allowed to get concentrated by evaporation induced by solar radiation, produces a situation where Man's operations are to the advantage of various wading birds. The high brine concentrations and the inflowing and subsequent accumulation of organic matter brought in by the sea water creates ideal conditions for the two species of flamingos and the huge concentrations of these birds have to be seen to be believed.

Okhamandal, with Tata Chemical's salt panning operations there, is an important area for flamingos, pelicans, and a variety of shore birds. My visit to the Company's works merely provided me with first hand knowledge of what has been known. However, the extent of the operations, and the high potential they offer for a unique conservation programme could be appreciated only after the visit. Being personally involved in highlighting the need for setting up a marine park in the Gulf of Kutch, my visit to Mithapur on this mission is most appropriate. The bird sanctuary will be a valuable extension of the proposed Marine Sanctuary adding effectively to the conservation action being sought to be implemented.'

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Gulf of Kutch Waders and others by Arun Bhatia: Over the Republic Day weekend, at the suggestion of Shri. Lavkumar Khacher, a group of eight of us from Bombay went 6 kilometres east of Jamnagar, in the marsh area of Khijadia wetlands. A ten foot tall bund in a reclamation scheme built there by Digvijaysinhji, (father of the present Jam Sahib) goes 60 kilometres all the way to Jodia and this embankment between the sea and the shore, keeps the tide from coming in and the saline water kept out. On the shore side precious rainwater collects.

So Khajadia wetlands become unique with salt water marsh on one side where thousands of waders come wintering. They feed in salt water when high tide comes, rummage in between the salt pans, and when the tide is out, sweet water and further feeding sources are just on the side of the bund. Local and Palaearctic birds 'migrate' daily to sweet water when the tide is out.

Shri Lavkumar estimates that wintering flamingoes here number forty thousand. Some in our group thought we saw ten thousand flamingoes. (I thought we saw a thousand. Estimates are so subjective!) Here is the list:

Little Grebe,	Common Crane,	Red Turtle Dove,
Rosy Pelican,	Sarus Crane,	Indian Ring Dove,
Spotbilled	Demoiselle Crane,	Spotted Dove,
Pelican,	Purple Moorhen,	Little Brown Dove,
Indian Shag,	Coot,	Rose Ringed
		Parakeet
Little Cormorant,	Pheasant-tailed	Palm Swift,
Darter,	Jacana,	Lesser Pied
		Kingfisher,
Grey Heron,	Oystercatcher,	Small Blue
		Kingfisher
Purple Heron,	Red-wattled Lap-	White-breasted
Pond Heron,	wing,	Kingfisher,
Cattle Egret,	Grey Plover,	Small Green bee-
Large Egret,	Large Sand Plover,	eater,
Intermediate Egret,	Kentish Plover,	Blue Jay,
Little Egret,	Lesser Sand Plover,	Hoopoe,
Reef Heron,	Kentish Plover,	Sandlark,
The Bittern,	Lesser Sand Plover,	Common Swallow,
Painted Stork,	Whimbrel,	Grey Shrike,
Blacknecked	Curlew,	Bay-backed Shrike,
Stork,	Blacktailed Godwit,	Rufous-backed
White Ibis,	Bar-tailed Godwit,	Shrike,
Black Ibis,	Redshank,	Brown Shrike,
Spoonbill,	Marsh Sandpiper,	Black Drongo,
The Flamingo,	Greenshank,	Blackheaded Myna,
Rosy Flamingo,	Green Sandpiper,	Rosy Pastor,
Pintail Duck,	Wood Sandpiper,	Common Myna,
Common Teal,	Terek Sandpiper,	Bank Myna,
Mallard,	Common Sandpiper,	House Crow,
Wigeon,	Turnstone,	Jungle Crow,
Shoveller,	Sanderling,	Red vented Bulbul,
Black-winged Kite,	Little Stint,	Ashy wren-warbler,
Periah Kite,	Dunlin,	Great Indian Reed
Brahminy Kite,	Curlew Sand-	Warbler,
Booted Hawk eagle,	piper	Magpie Robin

White-backed
Vulture,
Marsh Harrier,
Osprey,

Ruff and Reeve,
Avocet,
Black-winged
stilt,
Lesser Black-
backed Gull,
Brownhead Gull,
Blackhead Gull,
Indian Whiskered Tern,
Gull-billed Tern,
Caspian Tern,
Little Tern,
Blue Rock Pigeon,

Black Redstart,
Collared Bush-
Chat (Stonechat)
Pied Bush-Chat,
Desert Chat,
Indian Robin,
Pied Wagtail,
Yellow wagtail,
Purple Sunbird,
House Sparrow,
Spotted Munia,

The Government of Gujarat declared this area of 110 sq.km. between Okha and Jamnagar as a Marine National Park in August, 1980. Several representations made by the Saurashtra Branch of World Wildlife Fund India to the Government of Gujarat resulted in this enlightened step now taken by the Gujarat Forest Department.

At Khijadia, infrastructure is nil. Pirotan Island is not inhabited except for the lighthouse staff and drinking water is not available.

Incidentally, the present Jam Sahib has a fantastic aviary within his place precincts where rarities are also kept, and he does some breeding in Jamnagar. Peacocks and peahens roam freely in the palace grounds.

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Food and General Habits of a Captive Kestrel (Falco Tinnunculus) by Taej Mundkur: It all began on the afternoon of March 5, when a member of the Young Naturalists' Club, of which incidentally I am a founder member, brought to college a kestrel wrapped in a cloth. She had found it near her home. From the moment I saw that defiant look in the bird's eyes, I knew I just had to keep it alive. She, the bird, was a female, and had been shot in her right wing at the joint of the ulna and humerus. Her left wing feathers, both primary and secondary, had been clipped. Apart from this, she was in fine form, and obviously very hungry, as she readily took 20 large cockroaches. After her hunger was satiated, she started preening herself. I later took her home and there she has been for the last

month or so. Her weight on the first day was 5 oz. and today she weighs 5 3/4 oz. on our kitchen scale.

In the beginning we found that she preferred only brown grasshoppers and left the green ones unmolested. But after a few days she began to eat both with equal gusto. It was probably due to my inability to keep up with her voracious appetite in supplying the preferred brown insects. In her natural habitat, a kestrel which feeds in dry bush country, would find mainly the brown grasshoppers rather than the green ones which are more commonly to be picked up in the green grass of well watered areas. Unable to provide enough grasshoppers of both varieties my store of cockroaches at home has also become depleted, and so I turned to new foods like meat which she relished, gobbling down large chunks. Her menu now includes white mice, house geckos and even large tadpoles.

One evening, a neighbour presented me with 2 baby sparrows that had fallen out of their nest on to the hard floor of the house. I fed them diluted warm milk, but found next morning, that the smaller fledgeling had died. It was still warm so I presumed it hadn't started putrefying and so I gave it to 'Fido', my kestrel. She jumped straight at it and started eating it. In the evening, she ate the second one which had died during the day. Except for the primaries which were discarded, every part of the sparrows was eaten.

Fido taught me a lot about feeding and general habits of kestrels though I cannot generalize as being true for wild birds as well.

My first observation was that she almost always, grabbed food with her right foot, and so I assumed birds, like us, are right handed or legged. The small prey she took directly into her beak. If I threw the food to her left, out would shoot her right leg and hold the prey fast. Subsequently, her first action was to pull out either the head or the lower jaw after a sharp nip in the head (this was done with lizards, frogs, and mice) and gulp it down. The forelimbs, entrails, and the trunk followed, and finally the hind legs and tail. If the prey was large, then she bent over and tore out small pieces with her beak firmly holding the body down with her taloned feet. A cockroach, grasshopper or such small prey would be grasped in her talons and demolished in a single bite or two. She ate everything, bones, skin and intestines of

small animals, but of larger ones, she left the pelvic girdle, femur, tarsus and the webbed feet of frogs. Once I found an uneaten stomach. This is similar to the eating habit of a great Horned Owl which I had known ate large toads, rejecting the skin of the back, pelvic girdle and hind legs.

The following may sound even more gory, but I did try it out. I bought a one day old chick for Fido. At first, she jumped back in surprise and then half flew on to it and of course her right claws clasped round the chick's neck. Weak cries of the victim stopped in seconds as each desperate movement caused the falcon to tighten the grip. Live mice were dispensed with in the same manner.

As is her practice, Fido, while feeding on the chick, started on the head first. It was almost always without exception that prey, be it of any type, was eaten head first. White mice seem to be her favourite food and so my problem increases as I have not yet found a steady source of these.

Another of my observations is that when I give her large prey, she protectively covers it with outstretched wings, especially if I approach her. I have never seen prey escaping her deadly claws, except once when a frog kicked her in the face, this caused her to release it. Scarcely had he escaped when she pounced on him and ate him up. A garden lizard of the Calotes group was also eaten, but when I gave Fido a medium/sized toad, she grabbed it right-handed as usual, killed it with the quick base-of-the-neck nip, but that was all. I later found the toad on the ground with no signs of having been eaten. It was probably repellent because of the foul smelling odour toads are reputed to produce.

Fido's power of vision is just astonishing. She is able to see a cockroach between my fingers from a good forty feet or more. As she sets her eye on it, she starts a sort of quiver which continues into her wings. She then jumps onto the wire mesh clutching it in fierce anticipation of the food she is about to receive.

I guess there is little purpose in dissecting pellets to find out what they contain as they would reveal only what I feed Fido. But I can most definitely say that she needs at least one of the following to

produce a well formed pellet: feathers, skin, hair, bones, chitinous pieces from cockroaches, etc. The pellet is ejected through the mouth by lowering her head, opening the beak wide and forcing it out slowly by a slight bobbing of the head. I was taken by surprise the first time I witnessed this process. I carried out experiments by feeding her with plain mince meat and no pellets were produced. If Fido remained on such a diet for a few days then, she showed signs of uneasiness probably due to over feeding and no proper excretion, which tended to be watery, white and black matter, which she ejected while perched on her favourite positions, typically white washing the floor beneath.

Mince meat with my dog's hair pounded into it immediately produced pellets while, if I just covered the meat with the hair, the hair was removed carefully and thrown away. Normal pellets are cylindrical with slight points at the end, varying in size from around $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches with a diameter of about half an inch, and their colour varies with the food intake, clay white with white mice, to brown with cockroaches and a mixed diet produces a large white pellet with a few pieces of chitin.

The kestrel's wing is slowly healing, but very unfortunately, the bones are not fusing in the right way. I tried to splint the wing twice, but Fido flaps his wings and dislodges the bandages.

I guess I am to serve Fido for long. All my primary attempts at getting Fido to behave like a trained falcon have to my chagrin failed. Fido was tied by thick leather jesses to my glove hand. She would flop down over my hand and hang upside down. She continued to behave disgracefully even after the straps were tinned. I have abandoned the exercise after receiving a few sharp nips.

I think she is terrified of the canvas gloves with which I used to catch her initially to put her into a night cage, where I transferred her from her daytime living area in my ex-chicken coop, which is 6 feet long and 4 feet wide and 6 feet high. It is covered all round with chicken mesh and has a corrugated tin roof. I have called this 'My ZOO' as it also houses an occasional wounded bird or animal, whose fate brings it to me. The creatures that have enjoyed my hospitality include crows,

sparrows, bulbuls, bats, owlets, owls, a juvenile pariah kite, a baby black-naped hare, hedgehogs, rabbits, white mice and a white rat, and now Fido, the Kestrel. I also keep an occasional snake which I may catch or get. I free them later though!! This reminds me that I had once placed Fido on the branch of a guava tree and released a Banded Racer on the ground. Immediately she cocked her head, watching it with great concentration, moving her head from side to side, as the snake changed direction, though she made no attempt to catch it. At this stage, you may wonder how mean I am to feed live birds, lizards or mice to Fido. I have to console myself that the bird would eat the same in the wild, even if it wasn't the very creatures I gave her.

At times, Fido sits crouched on her perch, almost pigeon-like with feathers all ruffled. At night she prefers to sleep on the highest horizontal perch which is a branch of a tree which I have added to the cage to give the bird a more natural perching space.

I occasionally spray her with water and she ruffles herself dry. I have never seen her drinking water from the bowl that I keep filled for her and I presume she gets all her fluid intake from the food I give her.

Lastly, I would be happy if any of the readers could suggest any additions to her menu or supplement to her diet as I have a difficult task procuring live food daily. Also, I would request any one to suggest methods, or the names of books on first aid for birds as I would love to see Fido mended, and ready to take to the wide open spaces again.

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Who will watch the Birdwatchers? By John Duffie: The public's conception of birdwatching has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. Once regarded as the genteel pursuit of nature lovers interested solely in the beauty of birds, the hobby has grown enormously in popularity, and this growth has brought with it a new quality of competitiveness. Even the name has been changed from birdwatching to birding, a subtle alteration that has drawn thousands of adherents formerly repelled by the connotations of the old designation.

A new type of birder is emerging, one whose primary interest is in seeing as many species as possible, and the excessive zeal of this small group, is tarnishing the image of the vast majority whose aim is the protection of birds. After years of encouraging people to take an interest in ornithology, naturalists are now looking for ways of protecting birds from people.

While the majority of birders are well-behaved, with a protective, even affectionate attitude toward the creatures they study, concern is being felt about the proliferating body of 'life-listers', people whose only concern is the adding of names to the list of birds they have seen in their lifetime. Many of these over-zealous observers have no real feeling for, or understanding of birds, regarding them not as creatures of beauty and grace, but as statistics in the continuing battle to outscore the competition.

G. Stuart Keith of the American Museum of Natural History has said that the new breed of bird watchers are tough, macho young people who burn up the country in a never-ending drive to increase the length of the vital lifelist at all costs'.

An incident at the Reifel Bird Sanctuary in Ladner illustrates the degree to which the life-list fad can possess a dedicated birder. The arrival of a rare kind of sandpiper was announced in the press not long ago, and one afternoon a gentleman arrived in a taxi and asked where the bird could be seen. It happened to be near at hand, so he glanced briefly at it, made a note in his notebook and climbed back into the taxi. He had flown all the way from Chicago that morning and would now fly directly back home, anxious to confront his friends with his exercise of one-upmanship.

A wealthy businessman in Jackson, Mississippi, sat out a couple of years ago to see 700 North American species in 365 days. He spent \$ 50,000 and travelled 150,000 miles in his quest, and while he broke the existing record of 657, he failed to reach the coveted 700 mark. Two uncooperative rare birds in Florida failed to make their appearance on December 31, and he ended the year with 698.

A writer in Sports Illustrated describes with open admiration a 24 hour blitz organised by a group of wealthy Texans, who set out to smash the record of 288 species

in a single day established by a club in Zambia. Starting at 2 a.m. in Houston, they travelled by chartered jet to a point where a rented jeep awaited them, and after working that area made a rendezvous with the jet, which then carried them to the Mexican border. They ended with 183 species, blaming their failure on the pilot of the jet, who had miscalculated fuel requirements. At the close of the day, one of the participants remarked sadly that if they had only had the Concord, they could have covered southwest England.

Sometimes the activities of the overly aggressive birders sound frighteningly like war games. An article in Saturday Review describes a day in the life of one of the most dedicated of these, a retired army officer in New England. Preparatory to setting out for an assault on Cape May, he produced a topographical map with nesting areas marked in red and explained his battle plan to the reporter. 'My people will cover the entire territory once over, lightly in the morning, meet at noon to decide what we still need and divide up the afternoon for the mopping-up operation'.

Horror stories abound. National Wildlife tells of a grey owl which appeared in Llyod's Harbour, N.Y., two years ago. It created a great deal of commotion, as more than 500 visitors a day poured into the small town. Hoping to get a glimpse of the owl, some of the visitors shook the tree in which it was nesting, while others tried to scare it out by shouting and even throwing rocks at it.

In northern California last year a group of birders organized a drive across a marsh to flush out a rare black rail. One member caught a brief glimpse of the bird and the party surrounded the spot where it had disappeared, one man vigorously poking into the bushes with a stick while others trampled the high grass to force the rail to reveal itself. They finally gave up the frustration, but a good Samaritan stayed behind and eventually found the bird, mangled and dying, having been stamped into the mud by a heavy boot. He picked the creature up to assess the extent of its injury and was thoroughly castigated by his companions for his thoughtless behaviour. One of the rules of birding is that if a bird is touched by human hands, it cannot be added to the life-list.

While the problem is more acute in the United States, it is not confined to that country. Close to home, a

spokesman for the Reifel Sanctuary admitted to being disenchanted with the new breed of birder. Signs on closed areas are ignored, fences and gates destroyed; the occasional adult visitor has been seen throwing stones at birds in order to see them in flight.

The outer walk of Reifel is laid out on a dike which separates the marshland of the refuge from the open Strait, and in the fall great flocks of snow geese rest on the shoreline during their migration. Unfortunately, the park limits lie immediately south of this resting place. Hunting is permitted outside the refuge, and if the geese are startled they fly directly into the guns of waiting hunters. The park staff have tried to protect the geese by closing the outer walk at this time of year, but there are birders who disregard the signs, climb over or break down the barriers and put the birds to flight. 'We hear the guns and it's sickening' said a staff member sadly.

None of this is intended in any way to reflect unfavourably on the true bird lover, the person who admires the grace and beauty of birds, whose life is enriched by being able to recognise the beautiful creatures that inhabit our gardens and forests. Not only do sincere bird lovers enrich their own lives, but many of them make valuable contributions to ornithology. Amateur observers have made enormous contribution to our knowledge of birds, helping to build a vast data bank about bird population, migration, distribution, breeding biology and other aspects of the science.

But the problem of the aggressive minority is so serious that even the American Birding Association, which did much to foster the new spirit, is having qualms. An officer of the Association is quoted in Audubon magazine as saying: 'Apparently we underestimated the ego involvement with which birders would enter the hobby. The sporting quality of birding which we purposely encouraged has brought with it a fervour that in many cases appears to ignore the rights of fellow humans as well as the rights of the birds themselves'.

The National Audubon Society feels that the basic love and fascination that birders feel for birds will, in the long run, serve to correct the abuses of the overenthusiastic minority. The Society suggests that a code of ethic should be adopted, to include such common rules as the following:

Avoid the use of taped bird songs, particularly when the birds are breeding. Observe birds from sufficient distance that they are not disturbed. When photographing birds, do not use flash and never damage foliage in the vicinity of nests.

Respect private property and obey posted signs.

Birding is one of the most pleasant, healthful and rewarding of all hobbies, and its followers have made important contributions to our knowledge of birds. Their conduct has been, for the most part, beyond reproach, and it would be sad indeed if the reputations of these dedicated people were to be tarnished because of the actions of an overly-aggressive minority.

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Rare encounter - Pratincole in Gujarat by Mr. P. S. Thakker,
17, Swaraj Nagar, Ambawadi, Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad-380015:
 I have seen the Pratincole (*Glareola pratincole*) at Thol Lake - the mini Keoladev Ghana near Ahmedabad, on June 21, 1981. The birds were five in number and I saw them stretching their bodies to the ground. The upper part of the bird was olive brown; abdomen white, and a black collar separating the white abdomen from the throat. The beak red, or bright magenta colour. The bird in appearance was similar to a courser. The available literature says that specimens of pratincole (*Glareola pratincole*) were collected from Ahmedabad. It has been stated that the birds breed in the region between S. Persia and North West India. The birds breed sparingly in West Pakistan. (Salim Ali and Ripley, Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan Vol. 3). The birds are rarely seen wandering over Indian terrain. Their breeding season is from March to May. Since they were located at Thol Lake in the later half of June, it can be speculated that the birds might be breeding in this region too.

I also tried to learn about the other species of pratincole found in Gujarat. I came to know that the other species found is the small Indian Pratincole (*G. lactea*). According to Harinarayan Acharya, the bird is local, a resident of South Gujarat. The birds were found in Mahi River in North of Vadodara and

were also breeding there in stony waste of the river bed. (Little Dale; Gujaratna Pranioni Sarani by H.Acharya, 1950).

There is no mention about the bird in the book 'Birds of Saurashtra' by Dharmakumarsinhji. Recently the species has been reported by Shree Shivbhadra Kumarsinghi at Gouri Shankar Lake at Bhavnagar. The bird also breeds there. Dharmakumarsinhji has confirmed this (circular letter of Wildlife Conservation Society, Bhavnagar, 1981).

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Correspondence

Crowds of Crows by Mr. Romulus Whitaker: The Madras Crocodile Bank has a minor but irritating problem with crows, pinching fish from baby crocs and even from larger crocs (who rarely but sometimes get a crow). We do not want to shoot them or cause similar disturbances which might discourage the many other birds which visit or reside here. Hanging up dead crows only worked locally and till the crow disintegrated. Thus we thought we could at least get rid of the ten or more nests that appear each year in June/July. Croc keeper Shanker was deputed as crow control hand and repeatedly knocked down nests at 10 sites two and three times each. He collected over 75 eggs during the 2 month campaign (and ate them as omelets) but the crows won in the end. It just became too much work even with the omelette breakfast as a dividend. A sustained effort might have worked but Shanker is dead sick of being dive bombed by irate parent crows with an excellent memory for faces.

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Unidentified babbler of Almora by Jasper Newsome: I It will always be one of my big regrets in a life (overflowing with them) that I have spent so little time with Salim. I was in Bombay in January and heard he and Ripley were holding a meeting, but could not wait and rushed off to another Kumbh mela. I went to BNHS again - still trying to identify this Babbler

which is omnipresent around Almora but unknown to anyone anywhere else and apparently not in the Handbook or the Society's collection - It is not common, - jungle, spotted, spiny, cbbot's etc; and has quite distinct territorial behaviour. The chief field marks are rufous brown rose wing and similar spot behind eye, with pale tips to the longish, fanned tail feathers. Otherwise grey/brown, darker, more uniform above, paler, more streaked below. (Size 2/3 common Bebbler). Humayun Abdulali was most kind and helpful, but remained nonplussed. It seems no one has ever collected near Almora.

ಬೆಳಕಿನಡೆಗೆ ನಮ್ಮ ನಡೆ

ಹರಿಜನ ಗಿರಿಜನ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಕಂಕಣಬದ್ಧವಾಗಿರುವ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಾರ್ಷಿಕ ಬಜೆಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಹಣವನ್ನು ಖರ್ಚು ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿರುವ ಕೆಲವೇ ರಾಜ್ಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಮುಂಚೂಣಿಯಲ್ಲಿದೆ. ಇದಲ್ಲದೆ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಹಾಗೂ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಸಮಾನತೆಯನ್ನು ಸಾಧಿಸುವುದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಹರಿಜನ — ಗಿರಿಜನರಿಗೆ ಆನೇಕ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳನ್ನು ರೂಪಿಸಿ, ಜಾರಿಗೊಳಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ.

ಸಮಗ್ರ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆಯನ್ವಯ ಅರಣಿಯ ವಾರ್ಷಿಕ ಯೋಜನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ 5.76 ಲಕ್ಷ ಹರಿಜನ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳನ್ನು ಬಡತನ ರೇಖೆಯಿಂದ ಮೇಲಕ್ಕೆತ್ತುವ ಗುರಿ ಹೊಂದಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಇಲ್ಲಿಯವರೆಗೆ 1.50 ಲಕ್ಷ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳಿಗೆ ಈ ಸಹಾಯ ನೀಡುವ ಗುರಿ ದೊರಕಿದೆ. ಈ ವರ್ಷ 1.60 ಲಕ್ಷ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳು ಈ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ ಪಡೆಯಲಿದೆ.

ಈಗಾಗಲೇ ಇರುವ 410 ವಸತಿಗೃಹಗಳ ಜೊತೆಗೆ ಈ ವರ್ಷ ಇನ್ನೂ 130 ವಸತಿಗೃಹಗಳನ್ನು ತೆರೆಯಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಇದಲ್ಲದೆ ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗಗಳಿಗಾಗಿರುವ ವಸತಿ ಗೃಹಗಳಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ಶೇ. 25ರಷ್ಟು ಸ್ಥಾನಗಳನ್ನು ಹರಿಜನರಿಗೆ ನೀಡಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಹೀಗಾಗಿ ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಒಟ್ಟು 7000 ಹರಿಜನ — ಗಿರಿಜನ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿ ವಿದ್ಯಾನಿಯರಿಗೆ ವಸತಿ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ ಉಂಟು. ಹರಿಜನ — ಗಿರಿಜನರಿಗಾಗಿ ನಾಲ್ಕು ಸೈನಿಕ ಶಾಲೆ ಮಾದರಿಯ ವಸತಿ ಶಾಲೆಗಳನ್ನು ಸ್ಥಾಪಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು.

ಹರಿಜನ — ಗಿರಿಜನರು ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಉದ್ಯೋಗಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ನಿಗದಿತ ಶೇಕಡಾ 18 ರಷ್ಟು ಸ್ಥಾನಗಳನ್ನು ಪಡೆಯುವುದನ್ನು ಖಚಿತ ಪಡಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆಯಲ್ಲದೆ ಬಡ್ತಿಯಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ಕೂಡಾ ಸ್ಥಾನಗಳನ್ನು ಮೀಸಲಿಡಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಇದನ್ನೂ ಖಚಿತಪಡಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲು ಎಲ್ಲ ನೇಮಕಾತಿ ಸಮಿತಿಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸಮಾಜ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಇಲಾಖೆಯ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು ಸದಸ್ಯರಾಗಿದ್ದಾರಲ್ಲದೆ ಮುಖ್ಯ ಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷತೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಒಂದು ಉನ್ನತ ಸಮಿತಿಯನ್ನು ಕೂಡ ರಚಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಹರಿಜನರ ಮೇಲಿನ ದೌರ್ಜನ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಕಂಡು ಹಿಡಿದು ಅವರಿಗೆ ನ್ಯಾಯ ದೊರಕಿಸಿಕೊಡಲು ವಿಶೇಷ ಪೊಲೀಸ್ ಘಟಕಗಳನ್ನು ರಚಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಕಳೆದ ಒಂದೂವರೆ ವರ್ಷದ ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ 16050 ಪ್ರಕರಣಗಳನ್ನು ಪತ್ತೆ ಹಚ್ಚಿ ಕ್ರಮ ಕೈಗೊಳ್ಳಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಭೂ ಸುಧಾರಣೆ ಕಾಯ್ದೆ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಚ್ಚುವರಿ ಭೂಮಿಯನ್ನು ಗುರುತಿಸಿ ಹಂಚಲಾಗಿರುವ 63873 ಎಕರೆ ಭೂಮಿಯಲ್ಲಿ 7717 ಹರಿಜನ — ಗಿರಿಜನ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳಿಗೆ 34,273 ಎಕರೆ ಭೂಮಿ ದೊರಕಿದೆ. ಹೆಚ್ಚುವರಿ ಭೂಮಿಯ ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ಶೇಕಡಾ 50 ರಷ್ಟನ್ನಾದರೂ ಹರಿಜನ — ಗಿರಿಜನರಿಗೆ ಹಂಚುವುದು ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಉದ್ದೇಶ.

ನಿವೇಶನರಹಿತ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳಿಗೆ ಹಂಚಲಾಗಿರುವ 9.81 ಲಕ್ಷ ನಿವೇಶನಗಳ ಪೈಕಿ ಶೇ. 44ರಷ್ಟು ಎಂದರೆ 3.97 ಲಕ್ಷ ನಿವೇಶನಗಳನ್ನು ಹರಿಜನ — ಗಿರಿಜನರಿಗೆ ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆ. ವಿತರಣೆ ಮಾಡಲಾಗಿರುವ 5.27 ಲಕ್ಷ ಜನತಾ ಮನೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ 1.38 ಲಕ್ಷ ಮನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಹರಿಜನರಿಗೆ ಕೊಡಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಪೌರಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರ ಬದುಕಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಉತ್ಸಾಹ ಮತ್ತು ನೆಮ್ಮದಿ ಮಾಡುವಂತೆ ಉತ್ತಮ ಸೇವಾ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯಗಳ ವಿತ್ತರಣೆ.

ಹರಿಜನ — ಗಿರಿಜನ ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯವನ್ನೊದಗಿಸಲು ಈ ವರ್ಷ ಇನ್ನೂ 2 ಸಾವಿರ ಗ್ರಾಮಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಸಣ್ಣ ಪಟ್ಟಣಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಜ್ಞಾನಮಂದಿರಗಳ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣ.

ಹರಿಜನ — ಗಿರಿಜನ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ನಿಗಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಈ ವರ್ಷ ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತು ಸಾವಿರ ಜನರಿಗೆ ಸಾಲ ಮತ್ತು ಸಹಾಯಧನ ರೂಪದಲ್ಲಿ ನೆರವು.

ಮಾಜಿ ತೊಟ್ಟಿ ತಳವಾರ ಮತ್ತು ನೀರು ಗಂಟೆಗಳಿಗೆ ತಿಂಗಳಿಗೆ 75 ರೂ.ಗಳ ಮಾಸಿಕ ಭತ್ಯೆ.

ಇದಲ್ಲದೇ ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಗೆ ವಿಶೇಷ ನೆರವು. ಅಂತರ್ಜಾಲೀಯ ವಿವಾಹಗಳಿಗೆ ಧನ ಸಹಾಯ ಅಂಬೇಡ್ಕರ್ ಪ್ರತಿಮೆಯ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆ. ಅಂಬೇಡ್ಕರ್ ಜನ್ಮದಿನದಂದು ರಜಾ ಘೋಷಣೆ, ಹರಿಜನ ವಿದ್ಯಾಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಿಗೆ ವಿಶೇಷ ಧನಸಹಾಯ, ವೈದ್ಯಕೀಯ ಕಾಲೇಜು ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಗೆ ಅನುಮತಿ. ನಗರಸಭೆ ಮುಂತಾದ ಸ್ಥಳೀಯ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ 18 ಪ್ರತಿಶತ ಹಣದ ವೆಚ್ಚದ ಮೇಲೆ ನಿಗಾ ಇಡುವುದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ವಿಶೇಷ ಸಮಿತಿಗಳ ರಚನೆ ಮುಂತಾದ ಕ್ರಮಗಳು ಹರಿಜನರ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ಕಾರಕ್ಕಿರುವ ಕಳಕಳಿಯ ದ್ಯೋತಕ.

ಪ್ರಕಟನೆ: ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ವಾರ್ತಾ ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಚಾರ ಇಲಾಖೆ

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Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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Rare

PLEASE REPORT TO NEAREST
FOREST OFFICER IF YOU SEE
THIS BIRD



Common

Jerdon's or
Doublebanded Courser

0 30 60 90 mm

Indian Courser

NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. XXII

No.11 and 12

November-December, 1982

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by T. Koneri Rao.

Editorial

A Visit to Coorg: I had the good fortune of attending a meeting of the recently formed Coorg Wildlife Society at Mercara. The Society mainly consists of planters who have a great deal of knowledge of natural processes. - the relationship for example, between vegetation and the water regime, and they might well form a Task Force for producing an Ecological Plan for Coorg. Mrs.V.Rama Rao the District Commissioner, as well as Mr.Yellappa Reddy, Conservator of Forests seem to be the kind of civil servants who will encourage the rehabilitation of this wonderful area.

I was taken to Coorg through the kindness of Mr.Harish Chittiappa, and when I stepped out of his house in the morning, within a few minutes I could see a golden-backed wood pecker, white-breasted king fisher, black headed munias, a shikra, jungle mynas, spotted doves, red whiskered bulbul, red vented bulbul, magpie robins a white breasted water hen. In view of the splendid bird life of Coorg, I had suggested to the Coorg Wildlife Society that they could not do better than reprint in the form of a brochure the two articles by F.N. Betts' on the birds of Coorg, which were published in the Journal of the BNHS in 1951. This they have agreed to do. Dr.Salim Ali was requested to write a foreword and I have his permission to reproduce this here. Betts' has the capacity to make the sort of perceptive comments about the habits and movements of birds which make his writing so fascinating and instructive. Here is Salim Ali's foreword:

"I consider it a capital idea of the Coorg Wildlife Society to bring out in booklet form the excellent articles by F.N. Betts' on 'The Birds of Coorg' originally published in two parts in the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society in 1951. It will thus become available not only to its own members but also to the growing band of keen bird watchers that has emerged in South India, and serve as an authentic bench-mark for future observations. The pace of our so-called 'Development' has accelerated to hectic proportions since the end of World War II, and particularly since our Independence in 1947. In the process the natural environment has become drastically transformed, and some areas have been rendered almost unrecognisable even by those who were intimately familiar with them no more than twenty years ago. Forests everywhere have been ruthlessly devastated through the short-sighted cupidity of State Governments or to make way for often dubious hydel and other projects or industrial complexes or for settlement of refugees and repatriates from other parts of the world.

With the forests has gone the wildlife which was once the glory of those forests as I remember them in Mysore from the time of my bird survey in 1939/40. However, Coorg, and Karnataka as a whole, are fortunate to have such authoritative first-hand records as Betts' paper and the report of the Mysore Ornithological Survey against which to measure the ravages that have been wrought in the intervening years and their impact on the biota. It is to be hoped that in course of time the Coorg Wildlife Society will also be able to provide a similar record of the conditions obtaining today for a comparison with what they will be say twenty years hence, in this inevitable march of 'Progress'.

Bird watchers of the present generation, especially those in Coorg, may be interested to know something about the author who was an esteemed friend and colleague of mine and an exceptionally keen and knowledgeable field naturalist. In the years up to World War II, Betts was a young British coffee planter who had started his professional as well as Indian bird watching career in the Nilgiris, I believe, and made a very useful contribution to our knowledge of the birdlife of those hills. By the time I first came to know him personally he had shifted to Coorg and was Manager of a coffee estate at (or near) Hebbale while I was working that area during Mysore survey. He was an ardent Zoologist and had made an excellent collection of eggs and notes on Mysore birds - especially of Coorg - adding significantly to what was known about the breeding biology of many uncommon species. Soon after the outbreak of the 1939 war Betts left coffee and volunteered for the army. He was on active service in various capacities in the Assam sector till the fighting with Japan ended, rising to become a Colonel in the process. There had been a belated realization on the part of the British Indian Government only when the Japanese invasion of Burma had brought the war to the frontiers of Assam that India's eastern borders were vulnerable. They had then set up in haste the NE Frontier Agency in order to fill the political and administrative vacuum between Assam and Tibet that had been allowed to drift. Betts was appointed Political Officer for one of the several tracts into which this hitherto noman's land was divided. He was in charge of the Subansiri (earlier Balipara) Frontier Tract where he made friends with the Apa Tani, Dafla, Abor and other reportedly wild and ferocious tribes, and did much for their social uplift and economic and administrative betterment. At the same time he made the best of his opportunities to study the avifauna and collected valuable information from the tribals concerning these, till then, ornithologically virgin areas. At some point during his service as

a Political officer, Betts seems to have fallen in love with a young British women anthropologist, Ursula Bowers, who had been working for some time among the Nagas studying their local tribes (some of them as yet practising headhunters!). By her tact and friendliness she had won their trust and confidence to such an extent that she had come to be known among her British compatriots by the honorific of the 'Naga Queen'. An understandable romance developed which soon culminated in marriage! After Independence in 1947, when the services were nationalized, Col. and Mrs. Betts returned to the UK where he settled down to farming in the Isle of Mull (Scotland). Many of his meticulous notes relating to the birds of Coorg and NE Frontier Agency (NEFA), as Arunachal Pradesh was then called, he was good enough to offer to me and Dr. Ripley when our Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan was under preparation. They have proved of inestimable value in filling some of the gaps in our knowledge, particularly concerning the latter area.

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ii) Request to Readers: With the rather unexpected bonus received in the form of two advertisements of Rs.500 each from the Department of Information and Publicity, Government of Karnataka, I was able to cover the expenses for this year. But as you will see we have had to combine several issues. I do hope that subscribers will take note of the warning slip attached to this Newsletter, and send in their subscriptions without delay. If we could receive 250/- subscriptions before 25.12.82 it might enable the Editor to meet costs in 1983.

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iii) Checklist on birds: It is good to see that several birdwatchers are preparing checklists of various regions. The latest one to be received is a Checklist of the birds of Pubjab and Chandigarh published by M.S. Dhinsa and others of the Punjab Agricultural University. Copies could be had from Dr.M.S. Dhinsa (Assistant Professor of Forestry (Wildlife), Punjab Agricultural University, Luchiana 141004, Punjab, India for a price of Rs.4/-.

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iv) Bird watchers' digest: This is a useful publication, and some of our Readers may like to subscribe. The fact that Roger Torey Peterson is a Senior Advisor ensures its high standard. Address: Bird Watchers Digest, P.O.Box 110, Marietta, Ohio 45750, USA.

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v) Bangalore birds: In a recent talk over A.I.R. Dr.V.J. Victor gave some interesting facts about Bangalore birds. Apparently, there are 250 species in all, and 50 of these are winter visitors. Referring to some of the birdwatching areas Dr.Victor said 'Another place which is excellent for birdwatching is the Foam Creek behind Mahalakshmi Layout and West of Chord Road, Rajajinagar. In fact the small but deep nulla which flows here has been baptised by the bird watchers of Bangalore as Foam Creek because of the mountains of foam that accumulate in the nulla which arise out of the effluents being let into it from a nearby Soap factory. This nulla once had a large number of trees and groves on its banks. But unfortunately, almost all the trees have been felled and the shrubs cleared in the past few years for housing development projects. Yet this is where one can watch the mysterious mottled wood owl, the magnificent long legged buzzard and the brown shrike.

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Kalyani Dam revisited by V. Santharam, 10, Leith Castle, South Street, Santhome, Madras 600028: It came as a surprise to me, when I visited the Kalyani Dam on 12th and 13th June 1982 after a gap of nearly 2½ years, to note the abundance and variety in the bird life of this area. Being the hottest part of the year, I had expected the area to be hot and dry. Luckily there had been some showers earlier on, and the vegetation was quite lush and green. Although the reservoir was partly dried up, it did contain enough water to attract a few birds. The weather was also kind by being cloudy and enjoyable. This note contains some high lights of the trip which lasted for about 24 hours, yielding 69 species of birds, which shows how rich the birdlife is.

The spotbill or grey duck was among the first birds to be observed at the reservoir. There were 250 or so of them, resting on the shores and some idly swimming about. Towards evening, we noticed that they were more active, swimming and quite a few were splashing and enjoying a bath. The presence of such a large congregation of these resident but locally migratory ducks in this part of the year here might suggest that they could be breeding somewhere in southern India. As I am not aware of their breeding habits, perhaps someone would be kind enough to enlighten me on this. I would be interested to know if there are any records of these ducks nesting in this or any adjacent areas.

Incidentally, as I was going through whistler, trying to learn more about the habits of these birds, I came across some interesting pieces of information. He says that this species is usually found only in pairs or small parties of 10-12 birds of its own species, and that it does not associate with other species. He also mentions that they avoid large open waters and prefer small weedy jheels with plenty of cover or straggling creeks well screened by trees. In this context, the presence of over 250 spot bills here, where there was no vegetation or cover and the fact that they were seen on a fairly large expanse of open water is worth recording.

On my previous visit (January, 1980) I had seen a number of swifts, resembling the palm swift in general appearance, but larger in size, flying about in this area. I could not get a good look at them. So I was naturally eager to spot them and identify the species. I was lucky as I was able to find a group of these swifts, as we sat under a tree on the bund of a small pond, diving down to the surface, drink water and then rise. As they came down, I noticed the bluishgrey upperparts and the long forked tail and identified them as the crested tree swift. As they were moving very fast, I could not follow them through the binoculars and could not see the crest and the rusty cheek spots. Yet I was happy that I was able to add a new bird to my list.

What better reward could a birdwatcher expect than the sight of a lovely male paradise flycatcher in its glorious black and silvery white plumage, gliding against the background of dark green foliage just a few feet away; its long pair of ribbon like streamers trailing behind. What a graceful sight it was. The amiable bird repeated the performance for our benefit by flying again and also gave us an opportunity to see it perched on a bare branch of a tree. Not far from this spot, I heard the characteristic harsh note of this species and as I waited, I caught sight of a female of this species on a low branch of a tree. Could the presence of this pair mean that they are residents and are perhaps nesting somewhere in this locality?

Two other new birds that were added to my list were the Indian cuckoo, which was heard often, calling its distinct and pleasant double-noted calls and the shama, among the best-known songsters of our country. About 3 years back, Mr. Koneri Rao and some others had reported their sighting of this bird at Mamandur, a few kilometres away. I had failed to notice this bird on my last visit and was very

happy when I spotted it this time. At one spot we had heard some peculiar mixture of calls and whistles, rather melodious from deep inside a bush. Not having heard this before, I was keen on locating its source. All our efforts to flush the singer was in vain and the bird kept calling, as if mocking at us. After about 15 minutes, we gave up and continued our walk towards Pulibonu well. Suddenly we saw a black and white bird with a long graduated black and white tail and a conspicuous white patch on the upper tail coverts flying across our path. I identified it at once as a Shama. Scanning the bush on which it had slighted through the binoculars, we were able to sight it and notice the chestnut underparts. As we were watching it, we heard the same puzzling calls we had heard a few minutes back and only then realized that we had heard the Shama.

Last time we had heard the calls of the grey jungle fowl often, although we could not see any. But this time we were lucky to see a male jungle fowl walking in the valley beneath us. But surprisingly we never heard them even once. We heard the peafowl once this time, as against four birds observed in January 1980.

I would like to add the following birds to the checklist I had earlier prepared (see NLBW September 1980) and with these additions, the bird list has gone upto 92 species:
1. Little(?) Cormorant 2. Brahminy kite 3. Little ringed plover 4. Crested tree swift 5. Palm swift 6. Roller 7. Hoopoe 8. Brown wood shrike 9. Black-headed cuckoo shrike 10. Common hawk-cuckoo 11. Pied crested cuckoo 12. Indian cuckoo 13. Golden backed woodpecker 14. Shama 15. Paradise flycatcher 16. Little brown dove 17. Blue tailed bee-eater 18. Indian nightjar 19. Redwinged (?) bushlark 20. Pied bushchat 21. Franklin's wren-warbler 22. Baya weaver bird.

I am sure that this place has a great deal to offer to the birdwatchers and I hope some of the readers will be tempted to visit this place and enjoy its magnificent bird-life. I would only be too glad to provide details for those interested in visiting this area, which is hardly half-an-hour away by bus from Tirupati.

There was a proposal to declare this area as a sanctuary but I do not know what has been done in this regard. I hope some of the readers at Hyderabad, especially M/s. Ashok Kumar, IAS and Aasheesh Pittie would do something at their end and get some positive results in protecting this chunk of forest from further deterioration.

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House sparrows versus black headed mynas and koel by Y.P.M. Rai Grami, 414, Uttam Batika, W.Kutchary Road, Meerut 250001: By the end of March a pair of house sparrows had built their nest in a hole in a wall six feet above ground. One morning a pair of black headed mynas arrived and beligerently started exploring the sparrows' hole. There ensued a terrible fight. The two mynas caught one sparrow each and landed on the ground pecking hard at them. The female sparrow tried to escape by seeking refuge in her hole, was caught again, but escaped and beat a hasty retreat into the safety of the nesting hole. Meanwhile, the other myna had the male sparrow pinned to the ground pecking mercilessly, plucking its feathers away while holding it in a tight grip. It was an unequal fight though the male sparrow tried hard to retaliate. Within fifteen minutes, the myna had killed the sparrow, tearing its flesh from its head and nape. During the fight the female sparrow had made three sallies at the killer myna engaged in this gruesome murder. At some human interference the mynas flew away but returned soon and attacked the corpse, lifting and dashing it and then dragging it a few feet away. Then they hung about on the hole in vain hoping to drag out the female sparrow. By this time some common and pied mynas arrived, passively observed the episode and then flew away.

Jungle babbler (T. striatus): The jungle babbler starts its nesting activities here in April. It raises its first brood in May. Thereafter I find the cuckoos start parasitizing the babblers. The first parasite brood is that of the hawk cuckoo (*Cuculus varius*). Jungle babbler have been observed twice (1979, 1981) in Hastinapur Forest feeding single juvenile hawk cuckoos in July. Next in order of the time are the pied crested cuckoos (*C. Jacobinus*) who parasitize on jungle babblers. As far as my observation goes I did not find any juvenile of the jungle babbler in company with the parasite brood. But there are authentic records regarding the existence of jungle babblers with the parasite brood of piedcrested cuckoo. So the parasite brood of the hawk cuckoo (*C. varius*) seems to be more aggressive. I will conclude by saying that the chronology of breeding in case of jungle babbler is : jungle babbler (May-June) hawk cuckoo (June-July). Piedcrested cuckoo (July-August).

Koel: (Eudynamys scolopacea) Some time ago Dr. Madhav Gadgil sought information about the breeding biology of the house crow in order to ascertain the koel's parasitizing. My three years observations are summed up here. The house crow

(*C. splendens*) in our part start building its nest in the last week of May. It is the time when there is plenty of food to meet the increased hunger of the two birds due to their enlarged gonads. The mulberry (both *M. alba* and *M. indica*) provides about a months feeding to the Koel. On the other hand, all other birds that populate the environment of the house crow are breeding and are in plenty by the time the young ones are being reared. There are house sparrow juveniles which fall on easy prey to the crow. The nests of doves are robbed and bulbul young ones are preyed upon.

The koel's first drawn out call is heard in February and reaches its crescendo between mid May to mid June when several birds can be heard several times in concert day or night. Mulberry trees are in full foliage and offer cover as well as food for the koel. Though it may not be inevitable yet as several places where the koel has parasitized crows nests there has been a mulberry tree (or often *Ficus* trees) in the proximity. In May the koel starts making passes at trees where the crow pair has a perch and where they usually build their nest. It is only the male koel which is conspicuous at these times. The chasing and the dog fight are at their peak as the crows build their nest.

By mid June the crows are incubating eggs. Simultaneously the frequency of the koel's calls declines falling rapidly towards the end of June. In July the eggs hatch out and by mid July the juveniles can be seen perched at the periphery or out of the nest. The call of the koel's juvenile, usually one (in one case two) can easily be distinguished from that of the crow. The young crow has been observed being fed in the nestling stage but in all the cases of fledglings observed it is the koel's juvenile that has survived. The crow fledgling has disappeared, probably died from starvation. It is my guess, that the koel's do not parasitize on crows nests situated in places where in the neighbourhood there are no trees mentioned above to offer the koels cover and food.

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Unusual nesting sites of whitethroated munia
(*Lonchura malabarica*) by B.M. Parasharva, Dept. of Biosciences,
Saurashtra University, Rajkot-5, Gujarat: Mr. P.S. Thakker
and I visited the Sheelaj heronry on 20th May 1981 and could
observe a nest of whitethroated munia where a single pair
was nesting. This nest was attached to the lower end of a

stork's empty nest (Newsletter Vol.XXII No.2 pp.9-10). My field notes also show this sort of unusual nesting sites. It is well known that munias make use of the disused nests of weaver birds. One such nest was made near the window at my house. (Bhavnagar, Gujarat) which promptly attracted a pair of munias and they laid their eggs in September 1970. I was sad to see the chicks being killed by black ants. Similarly, another pair of munias attached their nest to that of a weaver bird at M.S.University of Baroda during November 1978. This nest was also near a window. These observations reveal that Munias are not disturbed by human presence.

In August 1974 a pair was found to nest below an active nest of the white Ibis, Threskiornis melanocephalus, at Bhavnagar. This munia's nest was a grass ball with a narrow side entrance. Again one of my close associate, Mr.Kardam Bhatt, was fortunate to observe a nest of Munia attached to the lower end of an active nest of the Pariah Kite, Milvus migrans on 24th November 1973 at Ahmedabad.

Roofed nests are a prominent feature of the family Ploceidae. The white throated munia being a member of the same family also builds a roofed nest. By fixing its nest under the nest of a large bird it has several advantages such as 1. it saves a part of the labour of roof constructions 2. the bigger roof provides more protection against natural disasters 3. as it is under the nest of a large bird, predators would hesitate to approach the munia's nest.

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A note on nesting of whitebacked munia (Lonchura striata) near Calcutta by Dipendu Krishna Roy Chowdhury, 206, Harish Mukherjee Road, Calcutta 26: On a Sunday on 23.5.82 while out birdwatching in Kodalia, Subhashgram (about 20 kms south of Calcutta), we observed a nest of the white backed munia within the dried-up creepers over a telephone post standing on the side of the road.

Though the Zoological Survey of India recorded white-backed munia (L.S. acuticauda) as far back as in 1969, as resident in Salt Lakes, Calcutta, none of its subspecies i.e. (Synopsis No.1967) L.S. acuticauda or (Synopsis No.1968) L.S. striata is stated as such in either Ripley: A Synopsis of the Birds of India and Pakistan (2nd editions) or in the distributional map at page 108 of vol.10, Ali and Ripley: Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan.

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Purplerumped sunbird (Nectarinia zelonica) nesting on the loosely fixed wiring under the concrete sunshade of the house by N.J. George, Dept. of Zoology, University of Calicut, Calicut University P.O. 673635: During the Onam holidays (on 11.10.81), my brother-in-law, Mr.P.P. Sebastian, Pulikken House, Edakulam, Irinjalakuda, Trichur Dist. showed me the nest of a purplerumped sunbird (Nectarinia zelonica) placed on the loose wiring of an electric lamp under the concrete sunshade right above the front door of the house. A female bird was sitting in the nest with the head and beak protruding outside. The bird had no fear of loud voices and of several members of my sister's family commuting to and fro through this door and also standing and watching the bird at the door step. Mr. Sebastian told me that during the past two years he had seen this (?) bird nesting among the thickly grown branches of a creeper (Jasminum species) over the terrace of the house. We had also seen blackheaded munias (Lonchura malacca) nesting among the branches of this creeper. Recently, this creeper was completely cut off and removed. While the present nest-building was in progress, Mr. Sebastian had twice removed the partly completed nest of this bird as he felt the nest was being built at an awkward site. But when the bird continued the work of placing the nest on this wire again and again, he abandoned the idea of further removing the nest. To verify the fearlessness of this bird, at about 8.55 pm., I gently touched the beak of this bird. It flew into the room and fell on the floor. The bird was gently caught and safely placed in the nest. After a few seconds, the bird flew off to the surrounding coconut and mango plantations and returned only the next morning. We did not see the male bird attending to the nest building or sharing incubation. The nest was hanging on the said wiring horizontally about one foot away from the door top or 2 feet away from the head of a person if standing at the door step. Three eggs were seen in the nest.

I had never come across the purplerumped sunbird (Nectarinia zelonica) nesting in such extremely close proximity to human dwellings and placing the nest totally away from any vegetation. Hence this may be worth recording.

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A useful book for birdwatching in Kashmir by A.P. Gupta, Pratap Rasulia, Hoshangabad 461001: Birdwatchers' visiting Kashmir in summer and in September-October, must undoubtedly be interested in observing the bird-life of the valley and meeting their migratory friends in the latter's summer habitat. An added attraction is the fact that, in Kashmir, one can observe the breeding habits of many of our familiar birds which do not breed in the plains. 'Breeding Birds of Kashmir' is a most useful field-guide for the study of Kashmir birds with special reference to their nesting habits.

As it is virtually impossible to describe all the birds of the valley in a handy volume, the authors have dealt with species found in only those areas which are more frequently visited. The main aim is to 'help the bird-lover to recognise the nesting birds which he is likely to meet in spring and summer in any of these areas'. The material for the book was collected during 'sixteen visits to Kashmir each from one to three months of April and September'. As one reads through the pages, one cannot but be impressed by the authors' familiarity with the area covered.

A remarkable feature of the book are 150 black-and-white photographs taken by the authors themselves. As the photographs lay more stress upon nests and nesting birds, they may not be very useful for field identification. This is partially compensated by five beautiful colour plates (drawn by Mrs.D.V. Cowen) illustrating 51 of the more colourful birds.

'Breeding Birds of Kashmir' by R.S.P. Bates and E.H.N. Lowther. Published in 1952 by Oxford University Press. Price not mentioned.

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Ponmudi bird ringing camp by R.Kannan - Courtesy: The Bulletin of Madras Naturalists' Society: Ponmudi hill resort is situated in the southern most section of the Western ghats, in the range contiguous with the Travancore hills, Kerala. The altitude is about 2000 ft. MSL but the climate was more temperate since the resort is in the western slopes of the mountains and thereby more susceptible to the South West monsoon drifts. The temperature fluctuates around a comfortable 22°C and humidity around 80 per cent.

The much sought after birdbanding camps of the BNHS

had to be dropped owing to a simple reason - lack of a substantial population of migrants. The 3 days we spent on the hills of Ponnudi could yield only 3 Ioras and a Redwhiskered bulbul which were netted and banded. The results of the preceding camps too were 'very poor'. Only a handful of resident species were marked in the Mundanthurai-Kannikatti areas.

The reasons for the apparent low migrant population is not very clear. Perhaps it was too early for the migrants to have arrived at such low latitude, or perhaps as Dr. Suganthan suspects, change in habitat could have been responsible. In contrast to what it had been decades ago when Dr. Salim Ali undertook his first bird surveys in Kerala, Ponnudi, today is a series of denuded hills laden with secondary growth (Lantana, Vernonia etc.) and tea plantations. As Dr. Sugthan emphasises the tea plantations are the major detrimental element of hill forests. Apart from shaving hillsides of forests they also contaminate the jungle torrents with chlorinated hydrocarbons which are frequently sprayed in the estates. Thus the toxic chemicals are carried even to the inaccessible areas of the jungles around.

Though it was an utter disappointment to the more ambitious BNHS scientists, the trip was fairly absorbing for me as I was able to see some resident birds of Western Ghats. Hopping through the jungle brooks lined with dense Beta bamboo brakes (*Ochlandra travancorica*) I was able to see and hear peninsular Indian Scimitar babblers, rufous babblers, Malabar lorikeets, small sunbirds, small green barbets and other typical residents of western ghats. Incidentally the only 2 migrant species we saw were the grey wagtail and the greenish leaf warbler which, try as we might, managed to elude our strategically positioned mist nets.

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Correspondence

The future of floricans by Salim Ali: I am glad to say that the birds are not as dangerously rare as we had feared, and I feel that their populations can be easily built up again if we can prevent further encroachment on their grassland habitats by cultivation and overgrazing by the superabundant useless cattle. Thus the Madhya Pradesh government are serious about doing by establishing a number of sanctuaries, some of which we have been able to identify.

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Richard Waller: Extracts from a letter to Lavkumar Khacher:

Now that winter has nearly set in though still reasonably wild in that the horses remain all right on grass and no hay needed as yet and the growing season finished, there is less to do on vegetables, though a steadily increasing amount of wood to be cut each day to keep the stoves burning. It is quite a good time also for bird watching on the reed flats of the Exey Estuary - a good viewing point can be reached from here in 40 minutes drive. There has been an osprey there for the last 2 weeks but not seen by me. The wintering avocets are coming in as well as wigeon, pintail, pochard, tufted duck etc. Of the waders one usually sees a good collection of Godwits (mostly black tailed) grey plover, oyster catchers, dunlin (the most numerous), ringed plover, a few knots and occasional curlew sandpiper. Curlew are always there (even a few non breeders in summer). Whimbrel and sanderling pass through rapidly in early october. Up here on the moor all the summer migrants have gone long ago and the first large flocks of winter migrants, mainly field fares and redwings, have arrived in the last 2 weeks. I suppose if you remain at Manali the changing seasons of birds are similar, though I expect winter comes earlier and is longer. I remember the colours were coming in early October. Here the beech is covered in gold and the mountain ash is red with berries which the fieldfares and redwings will soon gobble up and the trees will be bare. All we lack is the lovely splash of red or crimson from the male which I remember well in the Apennines, east of Rome, and in the woods of New England.

Last week the clock was put back to normal sun time (from summer time) so the mornings are lighter but dark comes early about 5.30 pm. So one hurries with the outdoor jobs but is rewarded by a good period for reading etc. before supper. In that way I rather welcome the winter. Today is typical. I look out from my desk across a field where the horses graze and wood is littered in one corner from a fallen tree which I have sawn up but have not yet been able to carry - nor is there much room for it in my well stocked wood sheds - beyond is all greyish white mist blotting out the rolling slopes of the moors and the drizzling rain is off and on giving no hope of sun which hasn't been seen for many days. But these misty days (it is really low cloud off the Atlantic) give a sense of security. One is hidden away in a fairy land in the clouds far from cities and violences and the world.

Even so, one misses the sun and bright colours, How lovely it would be to take up your kind suggestion of coming to your area.

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How bold is a shikra: T.Koneri Rao (Courtesy Madras Naturalists Club: Mr.Chandrasekar told me that a shikra was chased away by a pair of kites and on another occasion by a pair of jungle crows. I feel that the shikra is a timid bird since I had seen a small party of white headed babblers driving away this bird from their feeding area. Kites, crows and babblers in groups are strong enough to deal with the shikra. But once I saw a palm squirrel, chasing away a shikra sitting on a bare branch, only a yard away from the squirrel. Once a group of house swifts in Triplicane, on sighting a shikra circling over their foraging area, came dashing with twitter calls and drove away the intruder.

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